

**CREATION OF THE KHALSA :  
FULFILMENT OF GURU NANAK'S MISSION  
(KHALSA TERCENTENARY COMMEMORATIVE VOLUME)**

# CREATION OF THE KHALSA : FULFILMENT OF GURU NANAK'S MISSION (KHALSA TERCENTENARY COMMEMORATIVE VOLUME)

*Edited by*  
SHIV KUMAR GUPTA



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## FOREWORD

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Sikhism, the youngest of the world religions, arose over 500 years ago in this part of Indian sub-continent. A monotheistic, spiritual movement, with a pronounced social outlook, started by Guru Nanak, it received its sustenance, inspiration and guidance through the succession of nine Gurus. But it was not all smooth sailing. During the period of first two hundred years, Sikhism had to undergo a period of travails and tribulations. Guru Arjun, the fifth Guru, became a target of Mughal emperor Jahangir's wrath. This led to another phase in the evolutionary course of Sikhism under Guru Hargobind, the sixth Guru, who proclaimed the doctrine of correlation of '*Miri*' and '*Piri*'—through which, alongwith spiritual guidance, he asked his followers to take up arms for protection of righteousness and be prepared to meet the challenge of the times.

The period of Guru Har Rai and Guru Harkrishan passed off peacefully but the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur led to another re-orientation in Sikhism, when his son and successor, Guru Gobind Singh, rightly felt the pulse of the times and created the Khalsa to fight a dual battle—political tyranny of the alien rule and the religious tyranny of the priestly class—in the true spirit of Guru Nanak's Mission. Building his Khalsa Holy Order on Guru Nanak's doctrine of human brotherhood and unequivocal rejection of caste system, Guru Gobind Singh achieved the pinnacle of the social and spiritual revolution. A new community was borne with a new heroic spirit and crusading zeal.

The year 1999 marks the tercentenary of the creation of the Khalsa; On this historic occasion, it is our earnest duty not only to remember the tenth Guru but also to comprehend



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and imbibe the spirit behind his Mission. It is in this spirit that we thought of producing a few Volumes to commemorate the great event so that not only the present generation but also the posterity may know and grasp the Guru's message for a better future. Commemoration of the tercentenary of the Khalsa has also relevance in the sense that today's society is passing through a new phase of globalisation and liberalisation leading to the decline of values enshrined in religion.

I am happy that the Department of History of our University has produced this Volume consisting of twenty six articles by experts in their respective fields in commemoration of the great event. I congratulate Dr. Shiv Kumar Gupta, Head, Department of History, for putting all efforts in the collection and editing of the articles included in this Volume.

I am sure contents of these articles will go a long way in better understanding of the spirit of the Khalsa and stimulate scholars to interpret it in modern perspective.

Punjabi University  
Patiala  
July 26, 1999

JASBIR SINGH AHLUWALIA  
*Vice-Chancellor*

## INTRODUCTION

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The rise and growth of Sikhism culminating in the creation of the Khalsa more or less synchronised with some significant intellectual and religious movements in Europe like Renaissance and Reformation. Renaissance, regarded as an epoch-making movement of the early sixteenth century produced a critical, enquiring spirit, gave man a new outlook upon life and thus emboldened him to challenge medieval institutions. It was a time when there existed in the European Church most serious scandals and abuses. The necessity of the thorough reforms of the Church was recognised by all earnest and spiritually minded men. The only difference of opinion among such men was as to the manner in which the work of renovation should be effected, whether from within or from without, by reforms or by revolution. Foremost among those who came out to protest against the prevailing evils in the Church was Martin Luther (1483-1546). Before he made journey to Rome, he had all reverence for the holy city as also the Pope. But on this visit to Rome "the simple German monk saw things at Rome which gave his reverence a rude shock. He had expected to see every one awed in perpetual reverence by the holy atmosphere of the place." Instead, he found luxury and dogmatism, open profligacy and irreverence for holy things. All this produced a deep impression upon the serious-minded monk. The seed had been sown which yielded a great harvest in the form of 'Reformation' in the Church and emergence of 'Protestantism'.

During the same period the religious condition of the Indian sub-continent was in no way better. Hinduism had

degenerated. "The spring of religion had been choked up by weeds of unmeaning ceremonials, debasing superstitions, the selfishness of priests and the indifference of the people." The condition of Islam was in no way better. It had also degenerated to the mere observance of formal and superstitious practices to the exclusion of substance of religion. A contemporary of Martin Luther, Guru Nanak (1469-1539) came out to challenge the prevailing degenerate scene. No wonder his message worked like magic and could transform the lives of the people of this region with his simple teachings to purge evil. He had laid great stress on unity of God-head, worship of the True Name, self-surrender, importance of the Guru; denunciation of asceticism and renunciation, condemned caste system, vehemently denounced empty ritualism, penance, pilgrimages, fasts and all sorts of superstitions. No wonder his teachings had profound impact on the then society. Summing up the impact of Guru Nanak's teachings, Gokal Chand Narang observed :

Guru Nanak left the Hindus of the Punjab immensely better than he had found them. Their beliefs had been ennobled; their worship purified; their rigidity of caste considerably relaxed, their minds greatly emancipated and they had now become more fit to enter the career of natural progress to which Nanak's successors were destined to lead them.

The work of Guru Nanak was carried further and consolidated under the successive nine Gurus (1539-1708), culminating in the 'creation of The Khalsa' under the Tenth guru, Guru Gobind Singh, in 1699,

Creation of the Khalsa by Guru Gobind Singh was his greatest achievement, it laid the foundation of a brotherhood, which produced in the fullness of time, men of uncommon bravery, unique devotion and rare spirit of sacrifice. The Khalsa by the Guru was inspired by a sense of divine mission to right the wrongs of the world, and in the discharge of his duties no fear of earthly power was to stand in his way. The spirit of Khalsa was so strong that "Even those people who

had been considered as dregs of humanity were changed, as if by magic, into something rich and strange, the like of which India had never seen before." By creating the Khalsa, Guru Gobind Singh "roused the dormant energies of a vanquished people and filled them with a lofty, although fitful longing for social freedom and national ascendancy." In doing this he never diverged from the path shown by his predecessors. The Guru gave sword in the hands of the Khalsa not to establish any political power but to defend the weak and the downtrodden and to destroy the armies of the wicked and the tyrants—to fight the Dharam Yudh as it was termed. He inherited and fully identified himself with the religious, social and political ideology of the preceding Gurus. There is no denying the fact that "in the creation of the Khalsa lay the fulfilment, the culmination of the foundation of the Khalsa commonwealth—an ideal dreamt and put forward by Guru Nanak."

A study of the history of the Khalsa reveals how it was a socio-political order with its base resting upon spiritual and moral values a corporate body of people who, deriving from religion strength as well as inspiration, aimed at bringing about a social and political revolution of which the hallmarks were equality, justice and liberalism—values which Guru Nanak cherished so well.

## II

'Creation of The Khalsa : Fulfilment of Guru Nanak's Mission', is a humble attempt in commemoration of The Tercentenary of the birth of the Khalsa. Way back in 1997, it was decided by a committee chaired by Professor J. S. Puar, former Vice-Chancellor, Punjabi University, Patiala, that the best way to commemorate the 'Tercentenary of The Khalsa', in the University would be to organise seminars, conferences and publication of books on the theme. It is in pursuance of this decision that this volume has been envisaged and articles invited from the scholars in the field. There was an overwhelming response to the request. Each article reflects the spirit of the volume in hand.

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Fauja Singh's thought-provoking article, "Foundation of the Khalsa Commonwealth : Ideological Aspects" brings forth how at the time of Guru Gobind's death, "the personal Guruship was abolished and the Khalsa was transformed into the Panth or the Commonwealth, it was endowed with sovereignty and it operated under God's special protection, for the Panth, like the Khalsa was God's own." Thus endowed and protected, "The Khalsa Commonwealth set out to achieve the comprehensive religion-based socio-political ideology which its founder had placed before it."

Renowned scholar in Sikh studies, Dr. Jasbir Singh Ahluwalia's article 'The Order of the Khalsa : Significance in World History and Civilization', make a palpable departure from the beaten track in his interpretation of the Khalsa. He was rightly brought out how Sikhism has 'played a great revolutionary role on metaphysical, social, cultural, economic and political levels marking a significant watershed in the history of civilization.'

S. K. Bajaj in his scholarly article 'The Khalsa—An Interpretation' has analysed how the 'Creation of the Khalsa' was intended to transform the spirit of man by arousing heightened awareness of his being by making him conscious of the energy for achieving higher and permanent values of life.

In his article, 'Creation of the Khalsa—Fulfilment of Guru Nanak's Mission' Shiv Kumar Gupta dwells upon the theme as to how by creation of the Khalsa, Guru Gobind Singh never turned from the path shown by his predecessors. In fact, the Guru inherited and fully identified himself with the religious, social and political ideology of the preceding Gurus and marched ahead bringing about the desired cataclysm on the Indian scene.

Gurbachan Singh Nayyar's article "Creation of The Khalsa : The Legacy" brings out how the spirit imbibed in the Khalsa by Guru Gobind Singh for emancipating his followers from the oppression, turned over a new leaf and enabled his 'Khalsa' to establish a unique identity and to

live with self-reliance and dignity.

Dharam Singh has in his article "Khalsa Panth : Ideal Social Order of the Gurus' Vision" analysed that "the ideal society of the Gurus' vision, which they tried to build basing it on their metaphysical assumptions, has ethico-moral values serving as its foundations."

"Creation of The Khalsa—Uniformity of the Sikh Society" by Sukhdial Singh, throws light on as to how the Khalsa brought about uniformity among the Sikhs with a particular common code of conduct about their dress and discipline.

In his article "Institution of the Khalsa—A Philosophical Perspective" G. S. Sandhu has attempted to answer why the need of the institution of The Khalsa was felt by the Tenth Guru? What values this institution was to achieve and have been achieved?

In her article "Guru Gobind Singh's Relations with Aurangzeb", Harpreet Kaur brings out how "there was a change in Aurangzeb's policy towards Guru Gobind Singh during his last days when the latter settled at Talwandi Sabo for many months without being harassed by Mughal forces. Kirpal Singh's article "Guru Gobind Singh : The Last Phase" throws fresh light on this important phase of Guru's life. In his article "Humanism of Guru Gobind Singh" Sudarshan Singh explores how the Guru evolved a class-less, well-knit brotherhood of saint-soldiers and aroused in them a strong spirit of patriotism and nationalism; how his inspiring message of love, equality and universal brotherhood has a great relevance for the people all over the world.

Writing on "Guru Gobind Singh in Indian Art" R. P. Srivastva, brings out how "encouraged by the new faith and religious spirit, artists also expressed their innermost urge to visualise the achievements of Guru Gobind Singh in more than one style and medium."

Jaspal Kaur in her paper "Some Light on Sikh Tenets" highlights how Sikhism denounced renunciation and asceticism and advocated to lead a householder's life, made a virtue of hard work and efficiency. Spurred on by the

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teachings of their Gurus, the Sikhs are always keen to improve their living conditions by honest means instead of living in poverty, isolation and stagnation.

"The Concept of suffering and Liberation in Sikhism—A Philosophical Perspective" by G. S. Sandhu and Parminder Kaur brings out that the Sikh Gurus gave to their Sikhs the idea how they could come out of worldly bondage, overcome suffering and achieve liberation.

In his article "Transformation through Sikhism" Bhagat Singh throws light on "how Sikhs were instinctively opposed to religious bigotry and commercial hostility and instead followed a path of perfect toleration towards those who did not belong to their faith. Sikhism sheds caste, provides equality of status to woman, freedom from superstitions and empty rituals.

Gurcharan Singh, in his article "Social Harmony in Sikhism", epitomizes how Sikh Gurus gave to the world a message of universal brotherhood and equality of man which brought about social amity among people from all walks of life.

Parkash Singh Jammu, in his path-breaking article. 'Sikhs and The Nature' brings out how the Sikhs wherever they settled created "a new equilibrium with nature and instead of polluting it regenerated its improved version."

Surinder Singh, an expert in numismatic studies in Sikhism, in his article "Initial Sikh Coinage" firmly establishes that Banda Bahadur struck the first Sikh coin in 1710. These coins, according to the scholar, "throw light on a very important feature of the Sikh concept of sovereignty amongst them shortly after the demise of Guru Gobind Singh."

Navtej Singh in his article "Sikhs Overseas and the British" brings out how it was the economic pressure which compelled the Punjabi population to migrate to areas of new avenues by the turn of the nineteenth century. The British concern towards the migrants from Punjab was strongly influenced by the racial discrimination and was indicative of the evolution of a policy of repression in diversified form.

Shyamala Bhatia in her article "Chief Khalsa Diwan in Historical Perspective—A Critique," has brought forth how this institution had achieved the aim of protecting a young sapling of distinct Sikh identity, nurturing till it had taken roots and grown to maturity. "Achievements of Sikh Education Conference", by Amrit Walia brings out how the said institution has done a magnificent job not only in promoting education among the Sikhs but also to safeguard their religion, culture and language.

Mohinder Singh, in his article on "Gandhi, Sikhs and Non-Violence" observes how during the "Gurudwara Reform Movement" "Akali Volunteers' strict adherence to non-violence even in the face of official repression so much impressed Gandhiji that in his writings and speeches, he often quoted their example to other Satyagrahis." Gurcharan Singh, gives a thought to the "Role of Babbar Akalis in Freedom Struggle". According to him, "A by-product of the cumulative effect of the anger of the Sikhs against the British administration, the Babbar Akali Movement was the outcome of the Akali-Movement and was directed towards the attainment of independence advocating the use of weapons in defiance of the official Akali-policy, hence branded brave or 'Babbar Akalis'.

In his paper "The Role of the Sikhs in the National Freedom Struggle" Jagjiwan Mohan Walia has expressed how "The struggle which commenced with sporadic and spontaneous risings against the British rule, gradually assumed the shape of a national movement with the objective of attaining independence."

In her well-researched article "Woman and Development in Punjab" Malkit Kaur brings out how Sikh Gurus condemned the social evils, like Purdah, Sati, female infanticide and the beliefs and practices that down-graded women. But despite all these efforts, we have still to go a long way in translating these teachings into practical life.

In his article "A Brief Survey of Sikh Theological Studies" Anand Spencer sketches out an outline of the various stages



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of Sikh theological writings with brief notes on the basic  
nature of important works attempted during these stages.

### III

I am grateful to all the scholars who have contributed  
to the volume in hand. My sincere apologies to those whose  
contributions could not be included in it.

I am beholden to Dr. Jasbir Singh Ahluwalia, Vice  
Chancellor, Punjabi University, Patiala for having evinced  
keen interest in the publication of this volume as also for  
contributing a scholarly article and meaningful foreword.

Thanks are due to my colleagues in the Department of  
History as also other friends for their keen observations and  
suggestions in the preparation of this volume. My sincere  
thanks to Dr. Jaspal Kaur for helping me in going through  
the proofs. I shall be failing in my duty if I do not accord my  
appreciation for Dr Hazara Singh, Head, Publication Bureau,  
Punjabi University, Patiala for having taken personal interest  
in the publication of this volume.

Last but not the least I must put in a word for Mr.  
Paramjit Singh, Office Assistant of the Department, for  
typing the articles.

The volume is dedicated to the memory of Guru Gobind  
Singh, the tenth guru for having conceived the idea of  
'Creation of the Khalsa', which fulfilled the mission of Guru  
Nanak by bringing about a socio-religious-cum-political  
cataclysm in this part of the Indian sub-continent.

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July 15, 1999

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## FOUNDATION OF THE KHALSA COMMONWEALTH : IDEOLOGICAL ASPECTS

FAUJA SINGH

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With a view to understanding the ideology behind Guru Gobind Singh's Khalsa Commonwealth, it is imperative to consider the following factors :

1. Ideological basis of the earlier Sikh movement.
2. Conflict with the Mughal State.
3. Guru Gobind Singh's concept of *dharam-yudh*.
4. Code of conduct enjoined upon the Khalsa at the time of its creation.

Guru Nanak and his successors viewed the world as an "abode of God"<sup>1</sup>, an objective reality created and maintained by God and not an illusion or a chimera utterly lacking in meaning and substance. This shaped a positive and humanistic outlook which accepted the world and the human society in it with a full sense of responsibility. Renunciation of worldly life or asceticism found no place in it, but was rather strongly condemned as a dereliction of duty towards fellow human beings.<sup>2</sup> As against this, exclusive preference was expressed for the organic view of society in which religious, social, economic and political aspects are but integral parts of a single social whole. Central to this view was that one must live inside the society a full and active life, earning one's livelihood<sup>3</sup> and discharging, in a spirit of dedicated social service, all obligations towards one's family, one's neighbours and other

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members of the society. Such a life would not be, it was emphatically pointed out, a negation or disregard of religion, but rather would be its practising ground or a place of test and trial for religious beliefs. On the other hand, religion, too, would have little meaning if it were divorced from the realities of actual life. Hence, it was urged that the very basis of human life in all its varied forms should be constituted of spiritual and moral values. As for these values, the greatest stress was laid on God-consciousness, selfless love, truth, honesty, purity, compassion, modesty, public-spiritedness, charitability, detachment, temperateness and tolerance. They, if sincerely practised, would, it was assured, not only give the individual a sense of self-fulfilment, but would also render the world a far better place to live in.

Besides social responsibility and spiritual and moral values, several other principles were commended by the Gurus to the notice of their followers. Of them rationality was urged to keep individual and social life free from the depressing and devitalizing effect of a large body of taboos and superstitions pestering the society. In this respect, the Gurus themselves set a worthy example by subjecting several of them to a critical examination and declaring to be at once senseless and injurious shackles of individual and social life. Life must be free, it was stressed, from all such inhibitions and mechanical practices, if its stream was to flow in freedom and smoothness. The orthodox priesthood that lived by them by invoking for them legal and divine sanction and stood in the way of reform was condemned as a body of parasites and exploiters.

Another principle dear to the heart of the Gurus was equality. Being a natural deduction from their doctrine of universal Fatherhood of God, their concept of equality naturally transcended the narrow or exclusive considerations of creed, caste, clime, sex and colour.<sup>4</sup> All people were considered by them as members of the same human family. It was, thus, much wider in scope than the equality of the *faithfuls* who held all non-members as inferior

or the equality of a caste brotherhood who thought low of the whole array of caste groups placed lower down the social hierarchy. The only inequality allowed was the principle of recognizing the elements of mental and physical power and attainments as the basis of individual personality and power attainments as the basis of individual personality and character. They could think of high and low in terms only of merit;<sup>5</sup> and birth as the basis of social status has no value in their estimation. The religious sanction of birth distinctions was, therefore, unreservedly repudiated as also the widely current notion that there were any divinely ordained classes amongst mankind. Consequently, it was declared that the existing institutions of class gradation and untouchability were indefensible and against the will of God.<sup>6</sup> This *secular* view holds the key to the process of social change, for as long as social institutions are regarded as God-ordained, there is no possibility of mending or ending them.

The Gurus rejected the hereditary principle as the basis of social order and unambiguously declared that "class and caste distinctions are just so much nonsense." They also denounced the idea of any social apartheid or inflexibility and advocated social mobility in which people would be free to work out their destiny according to their differing potentialities. That social gradation determines social ethics and civic obligations of individuals was also disavowed. Like wise, the idea of different *dharma*s (codes of conduct) for different caste groups was rejected. The principle of one uniform code for all people, high and low, on the other hand, appealed to them most and was strongly advocated.<sup>7</sup>

As such, in the then prevailing Indian situation, this precept of equality was of great revolutionary import. It sought to equate the Musalman the ruler with the non-Muslim the subject and the Sudra. The untouchable with the Brahmin the twice-born. It upheld neither the man-made social barriers that bred exclusiveness and discord nor the disabilities of the womenfolk, a great festering sore,



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indefensible as much in equality as in justice and rationality.<sup>8</sup> Thus did it render inestimable help in preparing the ground for the growth and development of a new angle of vision that favoured and worked for a sound, healthy, integrated and uninhibited social system.

Fraternity was a kindred as well as an essential concomitant of the principle of equality. It breathed into the complex of human relations the spirit of love, tolerance and catholicity.

The precept of justice figured prominently in the thinking of Guru Nanak and his successors. The scientific socialism as it developed in the west in the 19th century and as we understand it today, was not known then, but justice as a principle of human relations was well known and was by Nanak and his successors strongly advocated. As a matter of fact, their close identification with the lower and down trodden classes<sup>9</sup> and their constant endeavours for their welfare and upliftment were conceived in a desire to plead for social justice. Similarly, the exploitation of the poor by the rich was held inhuman and unjust.<sup>10</sup> The concept of justice propounded by the Gurus extended to the political sphere as well, where it was regarded as constituting the very basis of government and administration.

While the actions of perpetrators of exploitation, injustice and tyranny were exposed and criticised and appeals made to their good sense and reason to mend themselves, the sufferers at their hands were exhorted to conduct themselves with self-respect and fearlessness.<sup>11</sup> The cheap and senseless imitation<sup>12</sup> on their part of their rulers' ways, with no other object than that of placating them, was exposed as an act of servility, and passive submission to a tyrant was dubbed an act of shameful cowardice. Compromise with injustice or tyranny was thus shown as a great evil and fearless or heroism in resistance to it a great virtue. In this fight between good and evil, God's support, it was assured, would be always on the side of good, for he

is verily the smiter of the evil and the wicked<sup>13</sup> and since time immemorial has been the unfailing protector of the good as against their enemies. "In all *Jugas* He has been creating saints and in all *Jugas* has their honour been protected by Him. Harnaksh the tyrant was smashed by Him and Prehlad the victim saved. The arrogant and the foul-tongued were forsaken while favours were showered upon Namdev."<sup>14</sup> Moreover, the ethical principle involved in the fights of the ancient Hindu heroes like Rama and Krishna was accepted, Each one of them had to fight against evil and each one of them gained victory through the help of God. The Sikh devotees themselves were presented as *Mall* or *Pehlwana* (wrestlers) in the wrestling bouts between good and evil.<sup>15</sup>

The ideas of Guru Nanak and his immediate successors held great attraction for the Hindu trading classes who found in them an adequate answer to the Brahminical exclusiveness and rigidity as well as a catholicity of outlook which could enable them to build up harmonious relations with the Muslim rulers in the interest of their economic benefit. These ideas also presented opportunities to the lower classes like *Jats* to improve their social status. The result was that the Sikh movement grew rapidly in both numbers and resources. The growing popularity of the movement alarmed both the Muslim and Hindu orthodoxies. The former being of the ruling community, its hostility mattered most.

As soon as signs of adverse reactions became discernible, the Gurus embarked upon preparations to meet the challenge as and when it would come. Even as early as Guru Arjan's time, the necessity of horsemanship and skill in the use of arms was realized and the first steps in that direction were taken. The tragedy of Guru Arjan's death at the hands of the Mughal Emperor and the Muslim orthodoxy and by methods of severe torture drove home the lesson of not merely urgency but immediacy in the adoption of measures for self-defence. Ruling out passive

submission to the official high-handedness as contrary to the whole ethos of Guru Nanak's movement, Hargobind, son and successor of the martyr Guru, put on two swords explicitly symbolizing what had been there in the implicit from the very first, a balanced and harmonious combination of the spiritual with the temporal concepts, called *Rajyoga*. True to his conviction and promise held out on his accession, the new pontiff collected arms, equipment and horses, trained his people in the technique of fighting by organizing regular training exercises and roused them to a sense of fervent heroism by precept as well as example. He also fought a few successful local military actions in which he and his men displayed marvels of valour. All this led to the building up of a glorious and never-to-be-forgotten tradition of heroism. After a brief interval of about 40 years this tradition was further enriched by the Ninth Guru, Guru Tegh Bahadur. The issue was now widened to extend from mere self-defence that it was under Hargobind to a close identification with all those people who were helplessly smarting under what was considered the oppressive and intolerant regime of Emperor Aurangzeb. A bid, more conscientious than powerful, was made to instil in the aggrieved the spirit of manliness to rise in revolt against their oppressors. No immediate success was possible and none was gained, but the heroic manner in which the Guru and his devotees, both before and after their arrest, faced up to the challenge and ultimately sacrificed their lives not merely was in the true spirit of the earlier Sikh ideology and tradition, but also blazed a new trail in so far as it was a commitment to an open struggle against the organized oppression of the State.

This, then, was the ideology which Guru Gobind Singh inherited from his ancestors. As seen before, the basis of this essentially humanistic ideology was spiritual and moral, and its social or socio-political doctrine both positive and revolutionary. Furthermore, this ideology was buttressed by a long-standing and carefully nurtured heroic tradition

in which use of force for an approved noble cause was both justified and employed.

Guru Gobind Singh, like his predecessors, accepted the basic unity of Guruship and put the failure to grasp this fundamental truth to lack of understanding.<sup>16</sup> This by itself should be a sufficient ground for the assumption, rather inference, that he accepted his heritage in full and tried to raise his superstructure on foundations well and truly laid by the earlier Gurus. But this is not all. In his writings there is ample evidence pointing to close identity between his ideas and those of his predecessors despite the difference of emphasis arising solely from the peculiarity of his circumstances. Like them he held aloft<sup>17</sup> spirituality, truth, love, charitability, equality, justice, continuance, social service, courage, dedication, knowledge and force for self-defence and righteousness and derided superstition, ritualism, austerities and pretence. Any attempt, therefore, to disassociate Gobind Singh's superstructure from its roots would be, to say the least, unhistorical.

However, this heritage founded and developed over a continuous period of 200 years and of basic significance in the comprehension of guru Gobind Singh's ideas received further enrichment from him in the form of amplification of some of its important aspects. He was confronted with a situation of formidable challenge and difficulty. The new turn that the tide has taken in the time of his father had brought the conflict between the Sikhs and the Mughals into the open and any retreat from that position of open commitment was impossible as being inconsistent with the inherent character of the Sikh movement, as also being unfair to the noble cause his father had espoused and died for. The hope, if any, of an honourable settlement with the Imperial Government was eliminated by the tragic executions at Delhi in which Guru Tegh Bahadur and some of his associates fell martyrs. After that it was clear that unless the Sikhs were prepared to go under, they had to wage a struggle against the aggressive fanaticism and

oppressive administration of the Mughals under Aurangzeb. The first course of going under was ruled out, almost instinctively, by the kind of training the community had received in the past. Selecting the second course as the only one compatible with the honour and mission of Nanak and his followers, Guru Gobind Singh plunged himself into preparatory measures for the inevitable struggle of the future.

Once the choice of course was made, the Guru attended in all seriousness to the task of raising a trained and disciplined force as his instrument of the struggle in view. No less important, rather far more important, was the evolution of a suitable theory of struggle which would not merely explain its aims but also boost the morale of the participants. Such a theory was evolved by the Guru by amplification or expansion of certain ideas of his inherited ideology and by drawing upon the remote heritage of the land. As noted earlier, these ideas were as follows : (i) God as the Eternal Protector of the good as against their detractors and oppressors; (ii) ethical value of the struggles waged by the heroes and heroines of Hindu mythology; (iii) uncompromising resistance to tyranny; (iv) justification of the use of force in fight against tyranny. All these ideas were now coordinated and developed into a definite theory which he designated as *Dharam-yudh* and of which he declared himself to be a divinely ordained agent.<sup>18</sup> In this task he was greatly assisted by his study of ancient Indian literature which he found replete with accounts of the exploits of Goddess Durga, Ram Chandra, Krishna and several other heroes in the cause of righteousness. All this and the age-old Hindu notion that the Supreme Being Himself descended, from time to time, upon the earth in the human form to extirpate incorrigible tyrants convinced him that his idea of *Dharam-yudh* was no innovation, rather it nicely fitted in with the character of the old civilisation of the country. Of course, his monotheistic convictions led him completely to disapprove of the popular tendency to build

up these classical heroes and heroines into deities representing divine incarnations, but he was satisfied that purely in its ethical sense this hoary tradition could be of great value and relevance to his own difficult situation. It could furnish, for instance, an excellent source of inspiration for his people by holding up to them the soul-stirring examples of the ancients; it could also serve the useful purpose of impressing upon them that in a fight between good and evil the victory of good is inevitable for God is always on its side.

But for its assimilation into the Sikh mode of thought it was necessary to mould this tradition suitably. With this end in view, he, as hinted earlier, divested it of its religious superimposition and reduced it to a phenomenon of unadulterated moral significance. The achievement of this was secured through the assertion of the old Sikh doctrine that none except the One God is to be worshipped. In regard to the idea of inevitable victory of good, another aspect of the classical tradition, it was asserted that inevitability, though perfectly valid, was not, however, to be mistaken for ease or complacency. This note of caution was presumably sounded to guard against the impression created by the Hindu tradition in which victory always came to the champions of good without any suffering of loss or defeat. The Sikh tradition coming down to him, to which he fully subscribed, pointed to the difficulty of the road to success and admitted sacrifice and suffering as inevitable concomitants of any struggle of righteousness.<sup>19</sup> He greatly prized victory in such a struggle but death in it, as indeed all resultant suffering, was to him glorious and something to be dearly cherished. He writes :<sup>19</sup>

Grant me this boon, O God, from Thy Greatness,  
May I never refrain from righteous acts;  
May I fight without fear all foes in life's battle;  
With confident courage, claiming the victory;  
May my highest ambition be singing Thy praises;  
And may Thy Glory be grained in my mind;

When this mortal frame reaches its limits;  
May I die fighting with limitless courage;

—*Epilogue to Chandi Charitar*.<sup>20</sup>

The Theory of *Dharam-yudh* thus evolved was elaborated further by incorporation into it certain new and original elements such as the concept of God as the Mightiest warrior and the investiture of weapons with divinity. God was viewed as the expert and wearer of all weapons with divinity. God was viewed as the expert and wearer of all weapons and His might was represented as unmatched by any one else. The idea was probably suggested by the divine attribute that God had the power to destroy any one, whereas none had it in his power to destroy Him. The purpose behind this seems to be to heighten the effect of God's intervention in support of good against evil and thereby to prove the impossibility of defeat of the warriors of good operating under His benevolent care and protection. The second element was motivated to raise the importance of weapons as they constituted the vehicle of success and power. Weapons were depicted as decorating the person of the Almighty Himself, thus partaking of the attributes of divinity. In consequence, they were entitled to all respect and veneration. The chief of them, the sword, was called *khal dal khandan* (scatterer of the armies of the wicked), *sukh santa karnan* (protector of the saints), *durmat darnan* (scourge of the evil), *jag karan* (creator), *sarist ubharan* (saviour), and *pratparan* (sustainer).<sup>21</sup>

Naturally, the use of force was of pivotal importance in Guru Gobind Singh's theory of *Dharam-yudh*. But it should not be confused with militarism in which force is employed for the sake of force, aggression or self-aggrandisement, for it was made subject to some major qualifications :

- (i) it must be for a cause legitimate and noble;
- (ii) it must be a remedy of the last resort.

But while these conditions are important and must be observed, it is no argument against having at all times the

necessary capability to use force when required.

The Guru's theory of *Dharam-yudh* may be summed up in his own words<sup>22</sup> :

Glory to noble souls who on their earthly way  
 Carry upon their lips the Name of the Lord,  
 And ever contemplate deep within their hearts  
 The good fight's spirit;  
 Knowing that the body is a fleeting venture,  
 They make the Lord's Song, they make the Lord's Name  
 A boat to carry them over life's rough ocean;  
 They wear as a garment that is a fortress serene detachment;  
 Divine knowledge is the light of their minds;  
 Their cleaner's broom in their wise hands  
 Is the broom of wisdom.

With it they sweep all cowardice and all falsehood.

In the foregoing paragraphs we have seen three things :

- (i) The religious, social and political ideology of the preceding Gurus which Gobind Singh inherited and with which he identified himself in full;
- (ii) Precipitation of a conflict with the Mughal Government;
- (iii) the theory of *Dharam-yudh* evolved by Guru Gobind Singh.

All these are vital factors in the understanding of ideological aspects of the foundation of the Khalsa commonwealth. A careful and critical examination of these may lead to the conclusion that the commonwealth of Gobind Singh was a socio-political order with its base resting on spiritual and moral values or a corporate body of people who, deriving from religion strength as well as inspiration, aimed at bringing about a social and political revolution of which the hallmarks were equality, justice, and liberalism.

Let us now see whether and how far this view is supported by contemporaneous writers other than the Guru. The most important of them is Senapat whose work entitled *Gursobha* is on all hands recognised as an authentic source on the life and work of Guru Gobind Singh.



According to him the creation of the Khalsa was motivated as under.<sup>23</sup>

"For this was the Khalsa created :  
To fight the evil, to smite the wicked,  
And to get rid of the crisis."

This clearly points to the purpose of the *Dharam-yudh* to which a reference has been made earlier. Besides, some principles of social conduct are given by the writer as injunctions of the Guru, which, if not exhaustive, do have the merit of giving some useful information on the strict discipline the Khalsa was required to observe.<sup>24</sup> For instance, it was enjoined upon the members of the Khalsa to have absolutely no truck with the *Meenas*, *Dhirmalliyas*, *Ramraiya*s, and *Masands*. All of them were to be shunned not merely for their tainted role in the past but also as a safeguard against their baneful influence in the future. All intoxicants were to be avoided, most of all tobacco because it was regarded as the worst of all. Keeping of unshorn hair was another 'must' and hence entering into any relationship with the clean-shaven was forbidden. It was further stressed that livelihood must be earned by hard labour and honesty and out of it one tenth, called *daswandh*, should be set apart for the Guru's *golak* or treasury. Piecing all these bits together, the picture that emerges from Senapat's account is broadly corroborative of the view that the Khalsa was primarily a militant organization having a socio-religious basis, but oriented towards a struggle against the Mughal government.

Another contemporary writer Nand Lal Goya, who spent several years in Guru Gobind Singh's camp, has made the position still clearer. He pictures the Guru as being at once a saint and a king—*badshah-darvesh* or *ham darvesh wa ham sultan*.<sup>25</sup> In the first capacity he is depicted as a man of God, a master of the two words and a saviour, perfect in spiritual and moral attainments and ideal as a leader and guide of humanity, while in the second he is shown as an exemplary dispenser of justice and administrator<sup>26</sup> and a

peerless warrior unmatched by Arjun, Bhim, Rustam, Sam, Asfandiyar, Lakshman, Ram, Mahesh and Ganesh.<sup>27</sup>

*Chih Arjun chih Bhim o chih Rustam chih Sam*

*.Chih Asfand-yar o chih Lachhman chih Ram*

*Hazaran Mahesh o hazaran Ganesh*

*Ba-payish nihadah sar-ijz-i-khesh.*

(What to talk of Arjun, Bhim, Sam, Asfandiyar, Lachhman and Ram! Thousands of Maheshas and Ganeshas lie prostrate at His feet.)

That the Guru's valour and perfection in the use of arms were intended and employed for promoting the cause of righteousness is stressed over and again by the writer. For instance<sup>28</sup> :

*Rukh-i-adl o insaf afrokhtah*

*Dil-i-jabar o bedad ra sokhta*

*Bina-i-sitam ra bar-andakhta*

*Sar-i-ma' dalt ra bar-afrokhta.*

(He brightened up the face of equity and justice and burnt down the heart of tyranny and inquiry. He uprooted the foundation of cruelty and lifted the head of justice.)

The writer has repeatedly referred to his being the smiter of tyrants and miscreants<sup>29</sup> (*Sarshikan-i-devsaran, gardanzan-i-sarkashan, gardanzan-i-har sarkash-o-zalim, sitamgaran ra par o bal shikasta*)

Nand Lal's account of a code of conduct enjoined upon the Khalsa shows that the Khalsa was cast in the Master's own image, a fact to which the Guru himself testified by addressing the Khalsa as his *alter ego* (*Khalsa mero rup hai khas*).<sup>30</sup> The same values or principles that were cherished by the Guru thus became obligatory for all his followers and in them were included high spiritual and moral values, sound and healthy social relations, conscientious earning of livelihood, charitableness and heroism. Khalsa was viewed as one free from malicious criticism and the five evils of sexuality, wrathfulness capacity, attachment and egotism, steeped in God-consciousness and having courage in abundance. Furthermore, he was portrayed as one who would practise oppression against none, who would cherish

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the poor and crush the wicked, who, seated on horseback and playing his weapons with dexterity, would march upon the Malechh Turks and destroy the evil. Guru Gobind Singh explained his aims to Bhai Nand Lal in the following manner :

Listen, O Nand Lal, to this truth :  
Our own Raj I would manifest;  
The four castes I would make into one;  
God's Name would then on all lips be;  
And my men would be riding horses and flying hawks :  
A sight that would put the Turks to rout.<sup>31</sup>

A view similar to this but far more elaborate is expressed in the *Prem Sumarg*, a semi-contemporary source, produced about a decade after the death of Guru Gobind Singh. The usual principles which ought to govern the conduct of the members of the Khalsa, both religious and social, are explained here with fervour and lucidity. Along with them, great stress is laid on the obligation of keeping weapons and on their discreet use. The author writes<sup>32</sup> : "No Singh should separate his weapons from his person. He should remain docile as a cow. But when he finds himself confronted with a tyrant bent upon mischief and dead to all appeals, when religion and honour are at stake and when there is no other alternative left, then he must resort to weapons as a remedy of the last resort."

Of great significance in this connection is also the fact that one third of this book is devoted to the spelling out of an ideal polity for a future *Khalsa Raj*. This along with the establishment, howsoever shortlived, of a Khalsa government under Banda Singh within two years of Guru Gobind Singh's death may furnish a further insight into the ideological background and aspiration of the Khalsa.

The *Rahatnamas* standing in the names of Desa Singh, Daya Singh and Chaupa Singh may not have been the works of the people with whom they are associated, but they were certainly the attempts of some devoted Sikhs who had some intimate knowledge of the Sikh code of conduct

as prescribed by Guru Gobind Singh. These *Rahatnamas*, no doubt, have some minor difference, but on the whole the picture presented by them is not very different from the one we have seen above.

An essential part of Guru Gobind Singh's *Rehat* injunctions for the namely *kes* (unshorn hair), *kangha* (comb), *kachh* (shorts), and some weapons. The first three *kes*, *kangha* and *kachh* are found mentioned in the contemporary or near-contemporary records. Regarding the weapons, the *Prem Sumarg* makes a mention of five arms without telling their names. Reading history backward, we can, say, with some justification, that *kirpan* and *kara* were included in this group of five arms. It seems that with the passage of time three of the five arms fell into disuse leaving only two behind : *kirpan* and *kara*. These two gradually became an essential part of the Sikh apparel. All the five are collectively called the *Five Ks*, *K* being the initial letter of each of the five names.

It is important to see whether these *Ks* had any ideological significance. That they could not be without a purpose may be readily conceded. They are believed by almost all scholars of Sikhism to have had a deeper significance, which was that they symbolised the ideology of Guru Gobind Singh. Each symbol, it is affirmed, stands for a certain idea or group of ideas : as for instance, *kes* for spirituality; *kangha* for physical cleanliness; *kachh* for sex morality and self-control, *kara* for moral professional integrity and *kirpan* for heroism and defence of righteousness. Altogether they are supposed to confer upon their wearers the manly and upright image of their Great Master.

Some scholars have contended that the symbolic value of the various *Ks* was a later development. Their view is that in the beginning these articles were introduced for military and political purpose. They were introduced because of their tremendous value in active military life and also for the reason that they were marks of political defence and self-respect.

The latter view seems sound and scientific, but its contention that the Ks had no spiritual significance at the time of their introduction is open to doubt and cannot be accepted as final without further investigation.

Each initiate into the fold of Guru Gobind Singh's Khalsa had to pass through the ceremony of steel-baptism which inculcated in him, besides the determination to carry out the prescribed injunctions, the spirit of heroism. This spirit was intensified in many ways : by the dramatic manner in which the Guru initiated the reform and by the compulsory use of the term 'Singh' meaning lion at the end of every Khalsa's name. Pledges administered publicly on the occasion of baptism required the initiate to combine in their conduct this ideal of heroism with the other teachings of the Gurus.

In the foregoing pages we have examined, at some length, the ideological aspects of the creation of the Khalsa. When at the time of Guru Gobind Singh's death, the personal Guruship was abolished and the Khalsa was transformed into the Panth or the commonwealth, it was endowed with sovereignty and it operated under God's special protection, for the Panth, like the Khalsa was God's own.<sup>33</sup> Thus endowed and thus protected, the Khalsa Commonwealth set out to achieve the comprehensive religion-based socio-political ideology which its founder, Guru Gobind Singh, had placed before it.

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Asa Mahalla 2, *Adi Granth*, p. 463.
2. Bhai Grudas, *Var 1, Pauris* 29, 40.
3. Ghal khae kichh hathon dei, Nanak rah pachhane sei, *Var Sarang*, Mohalla 4.
4. All have sprung from the same light, hence any distinction between them is wrong. Parbhathi, Kabir, *Adi Granth*, p. 1349.
5. The status of a person is that which is determined by his deeds.  
Guru Nanak, Parbhathi, *Adi Granth*, p. 1330.
6. Guru Nanak, *Sri Rag, Ashtpadi*, 'Varn avarn na bhawni ji kisai wada karae'.
7. Updesh chauh varna ko sanjah. *Adi Granth*, p. 747.

8. Guru Nanak, Asa di Var, *Adi Granth*, p. 473.
9. Guru Nanak, Sri Rag, *Adi Granth*, p. 15.
10. Guru Nanak, Var, Majh, *Adi Granth*, p. 140 "If a piece of cloth is stained with blood, it gets polluted. How can a person be pure, if he sucks human blood?"
11. Fear not and frighten not. Saloks of Guru Teg Bahadur, *Adi Granth*, p. 1427.
12. Guru Nanak, Rag Dhanasri, *Adi Granth*, p. 665; Asa di Var, *Adi Granth*, pp. 462-475; Nile vastar pehar hovai parvan. Khatriah dharam chhodia malechh bhakhia gahi.
13. Guru Arjan, Var Gujri, *Adi Granth*, p. 517 "sakat nindak dusht khin mahe bidariyan" (He smites the evil-minded, the ill-tongued and the wicked in a second; Guru Amardas, *Adi Granth*, p. 517; "jo das tere ki ninda kare tis mar pichai".) He who talks ill of His humble servant, is destroyed by him.
14. Asa Mohalla 4, Chhant ghar 4, *Adi Granth*, p. 451.
15. Guru Arjan, Sri Rag, *Adi Granth*, p. 74.
16. *Bachitar Natak*, chapter 5, For Nand Lal's support to this see *Kulliyat*, p. 160 : *Hamu guru Gobind Singh, Hamu Nanak ast.*
17. See *Akal Ustat, Sawayyas, Jap and Bachitar Natak.*
18. *Bachitar Natak*, Chapter 6.
19. 'Should you desire to be a player in the game of love, come prepared for self-sacrifice. Should you venture to tread this path, sacrifice your head without demur. Guru Nanak, Salok Varan to Wadhik, *Adi Granth*, p. 1412.
20. *Selections from The Sacred Writings of the Sikhs (UNESCO)*, p. 274.
21. *Bachitar Natak*, 1; *Sacred Writings of Sikhs*, p. 270.
22. *Dasam Granth, Krishnaotat. Sacred Writings of the Sikhs*, pp. 274-75.
23. *Gursobha*, 14/130.
24. Senapat, *Gursobha*, chapter 5.
25. Bhai Nand Lal, *Kulliyat*, ed. Dr. Ganda Singh, pp. 124, 142.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 130.
27. *Ibid.*, pp. 168-169.
28. *Ibid.*, pp. 164-165.
29. *Ibid.*, pp. 131, 141, 143.
30. *Sarb Loh; Gursobha*, p. 105.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 183. Some people question that the code of conduct standing in the name of Nand Lal was his work. Dr. Ganda Singh gives the evidence of the surviving members of the writer's family in proof of its being a genuine work of Nand Lal. My own opinion is that there is nothing in it (excepting the last two lines which may be an interpolation) which does not find support in other contemporary works.
32. *Prem Sumarg*, edited by Randhir Singh, p. 11.
33. *Bachitar Natak*, Chapter 6.

# THE ORDER OF THE KHALSA : SIGNIFICANCE IN WORLD HISTORY & CIVILIZATION

DR. JASBIR SINGH AHLUWALIA

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Sikhism, the youngest among world religions, appearing in the 15th century medieval India, played a great revolutionary role on metaphysical, social, cultural, economic and political levels, marking a significant watershed in the history of civilization. With its new conception of man, society and state, Sikhism contained the seeds of a new civilization in world history, particularly in sub-continental India, radically distinct from the earlier ones.

Sikhism, a unique 'revealed' religion originated with Guru Nanak (1469-1539 AD) who was succeeded by nine other Prophets—Guru Gobind Singh (1666-1708 AD) being the last and tenth prophet. It is a distinctive monotheistic faith envisioning one supreme God who is Creator also.

Sikhism endeavoured for a new dispensation characterized by the values of liberty, equality, justice, tolerance and non-violence, discarding discriminations of all kinds on grounds of creed, caste, class, race, region, sex, etc. God is realizable by man in his very earthly, household life, through spiritual enlightenment, moral responsibility, intellectual catholicity and social commitment.

The Sikh Scripture, Guru Granth (earlier known as *Adi Granth*), is unique among the scriptures of different religions. The *Adi Granth* was prepared by the fifth Prophet himself who compiled holy composition of the earlier Gurus as well as of like-spirited Hindu Saints and Muslim Sufis. Later,

Guru Gobind Singh added to the Adi Granth the hymns of the ninth Prophet (with one couplet of his own). Before passing away, Guru Gobind Singh bestowed '*Guruship*' on the Adi Granth, making it the Guru Granth, that is, the embodiment of the spirit of the Gurus. The Guru Granth—the divine Word—thus is revered and worshipped as the eternal "living" Guru by the Sikhs. The Sikh Scripture contains 5894 holy hymns in 31 *ragas* (classical musical measures) of the Sikh Gurus, Hindu Saints and Muslim Sufis—36 in all—from the length and breadth of (sub-continental) India, embodying the spiritual enlightenment and religious consciousness, from the thirteenth to the seventeenth century, with continuing significance and relevance for the liberation of man and amelioration of society.

When Guru Nanak appeared on the horizon, the Indian society had already become static and decadent; dogma and ritualism had eaten into the vitals of great Indian religious traditions. The prevalent scenario was marked by caste-based social discriminations, economic exploitation and political oppression. Encounter of Hinduism and Islam on Indian soil had led to fermentation of new ideas, seen in the Hindu Bhakti and Islamic Sufi movements, as well as to a vertical division of Indian society that aggravated the disparities and inequities on horizontal level. The attempts at a "synthesis" by blending the common factors in the two faiths could not succeed owing to the inherent contradictions in the two characteristic modes of thought.

What was needed was a new way of thinking, going beyond the Hindu-Muslim polarity on different levels. Herein lies the revolutionary role of Sikhism in ushering in a new mode of thought that radically changed the old stereotypes—ideational, social, economic, cultural and political. Man re-discovered his innate sovereignty and dignity; a new dynamism was injected into society. The this-worldly concerns of humanity came under focus as much as the other-worldly concerns of the soul. The dormant, slumbering spirit of man realised its kinship with the Divine



spirit. The stirred-up human spirit found its expression in the form of the Khalsa—being the vehicle of the Divine Spirit in history—created by Guru Gobind Singh in the year 1699 for realising the Divine mission of *Sarbat da Bhala*. (The welfare of all humanity). While creating the Order of the Khalsa, Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Prophet of Sikhism, expressed the quintessence of the faith in the following Prophetic words :

ਮਾਨਸ ਕੀ ਜਾਤ ਸਬੈ ਏਕੈ ਪਹਿਚਾਨਬੈ

(*Recognize all humanity as one in spirit*)

This is a message that has become all the more significant for the evolution of the 21st century society and civilization.

## 2. CREATION OF THE KHALSA

A unique cosmic play, the 300th anniversary of which falls in 1999, unfolded itself at Sri Anandpur Sahib, the city of bliss, Located in hilly surroundings, Anandpur was founded by the ninth Prophet of Sikhism, Guru Teg Bahadur, in 1665. In this historic town is situated one of the five Sikh Takhts (the symbolic seats of temporal authority of Sikhism).

For unfolding the *Bachittar Natak* (cosmic event) at the mound (where now stands Takht Shri Keshgarh) at Sri Anandpur Sahib, Guru Gobind Singh chose the first day of lunar month of *Baisakh* (The Baisakhi day) that fell on march 30 in 1699 AD—this year being celebrated on April 14. The beginning of the month of Baisakh symbolizes renewal and regeneration, ripening and fruition. Earlier, it was on this day that Gautam realized enlightenment and became the Buddha, heralding a new era in Indian civilization qualitatively different from the prevalent Hindu civilization, Guru Gobind Singh purposely chose this day for ushering in a new dawn, a new chapter in world history, a new phase of world civilization, envisioned by the first Prophet of Sikhism, Guru Nanak. The Guru had asked the faith-followers from all over India to assemble at Sri Anandpur Sahib on the chosen day. The huge congregation became

mysteriously innervated when the Guru with a divine glow in eyes and a naked sword in his hand, gave a thundering call for a devout Sikh to come forward to offer his head, then and there, for the sake of *dharma*. Guru Gobind Singh was putting to test his followers' readiness for sacrifice of life—a sacrifice of the mundane life sublated into the life Divine. Guru Nanak himself had laid down the test :

ਜਉ ਤਉ ਪ੍ਰੇਮ ਖੇਲਣ ਕਾ ਚਾਉ  
ਸਿਰ ਧਰਿ ਤਲੀ ਗਲੀ ਮੇਰੀ ਆਉ

*(If you seek to play (the game) of love, then, enter upon the path with your head upon your palm)*

At the third call of the Guru, according to the tradition, Daya Ram (a *khatri* by caste) from Lahore (now in Pakistan Punjab) arose to offer his head to the Guru who took him into an adjoining enclosure. At the subsequent calls of the Guru, came forward Dharam Dass (a *jat*) from Hastinapur near Delhi in northern India; Mohkam Chand (a washerman) from Dwarka in Gujrat in western India, Himmat Dass (a cook from *gheovar* caste) belonging to Jagan Nath Puri in Orissa in eastern India, and Sahib Chand (a low caste barber) from Bidar in Andhra Pradesh in southern India; they were also taken into the enclosure. The five self-sacrificing Sikhs had undergone a sacramental 'passage', a death-like experience for their celestial vision of, and inter-face with, the Spirit-Destroyer and Creator at the same time.

ਨਮੋ ਸਰਬ ਖਾਪੇ  
ਨਮੋ ਸਰਬ ਥਾਪੇ

*(Salutation to the Destroyer of all, Salutation to the Creator of all.)* (Guru Gobind Singh, *Jaap Sahib*)

Clad in new yellow garments with blue turbans, radiating dynamism and determination, they were brought back before the congregation that burst into resounding words of Sat Sri Akal (immortal and ever-present is the time-transcendent Spirit). The Guru, then, amidst recitation of the Divine Word, embodied in the sacred hymns, stirred

with a double-edged sword, the water, in a steel vessel, sweetened by sugar plums, and thus prepared the baptismal nectar (*amrit*)—the elixir of courage and compassion—that was administered to the five Sikhs who came to be known as the Beloved Five (*Panj Pyare*). They, with appellation of 'Singh' added to their names, became the first five initiates of the Order of the Khalsa created by the Guru through the sacramental nectar. Guru Gobind Rai became Guru Gobind Singh when he got baptized by the Beloved Five. The act of the Guru seeking baptism from his baptized followers, apart from revealing the democratic ethos of Sikhism, shows that God, the Guru and the follower become one in spirit (ਆਪੇ ਗੁਰ ਚੇਲਾ); the moment of baptismal transformation becomes the moment to transamination. This was a sacrament of resurrection, of spiritual ascent of man. The cosmic play at Sri Anandpur Sahib also pointed to the process of descent of God (qua immanent Spirit) in time. The spiritual ascent of man and the historical descent of the Spirit, in a sense, mark, under the generic category of the Khalsa, the evolution of sovereign man in direct communion with the Divine Sovereign. (*Waheguru Ji Ka Khalsa*).

The Spirit, through the Guru medium, descends in history to become its operative principle, its dynamic teleology. The spiritual aspect of the Spirit (spiritual sovereignty) becomes determinate in the Divine Word revealed to the Gurus; the *Adi Granth*, thus, becomes *Guru Granth* (the Sikh Scripture). The temporal aspect of the Spirit (temporal sovereignty of the Divine) becomes manifest and diffused in the generic category of the Khalsa. *Guru Nanak's Panth* becomes the *Guru Panth*, the *Khalsa Panth*:

ਅਕਾਲ ਪੁਰਖ ਕੀ ਸੂਰਤ ਏਹਾ  
ਪ੍ਰਗਟਿ ਅਕਾਲ ਖਾਲਸਾ ਏਹਾ

(ਪ੍ਰਹਿਲਾਦ ਰਾਏ)

(*This, verily, is the phenomenal form of the Timeless Who manifests Himself in the corporate body of the Khalsa*)

(Prehlad Rai, author of a *Sikh Rehatnama*)

ਖਾਲਸਾ ਮੇਰੇ ਰੂਪ ਹੈ ਖਾਸ  
ਖਾਲਸਾ ਮਹਿ ਹੈ ਕਰੋ ਨਿਵਾਸ

(ਗੁਰੂ ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਸਿੰਘ)

*(The Khalsa is my determinate form I am immanent in the Khalsa—Guru Gobind Singh)*

The baptismal sacrament at Sri Anandpur Sahib was also a cosmic act of regeneration, an experience of sublimation through sublation, that is, dissolution. What was annihilated by the double-edged sword—symbolising the destructive and the creative aspect of God Almighty—was the past *Karma* (deeds done under self-delusion) and its effects and imprints on the psyche that, seeping down into the sub-conscious and unconscious layers of mind, solidify into stereo-types, (*Sanskars*) for the present and the future deeds. What was created, through sublation of the past *Karma*, was a liberated state of mind, no more under siege of the spirit-less customs and conventions, of empty ceremonies, and rituals, of degenerating dogma and obsolescent orthodoxy. The partaking of the baptismal nectar awakened the dormant, slumbering, spirit of man who rediscovered his divinity, his sovereignty, his humanity (ਮਾਨਸ ਕੀ ਜਾਤ ਸਬੈ ਏਕੇ ਪਹਿਚਾਨਬੋ) proclaimed by Guru Gobind Singh at the creation of Khalsa meant obliteration of all caste-based differentiations; all hierarchical disparities; all gender-related discriminations, all creed-centred differences.

On another (empirical) level, the baptismal sacrament institutionalized the evolution, the endogenous development, of the faith-followers into a political community with a corporate identity, besides the individual identity predicated by the five baptismal symbols. Through this institutionalized corporate identity, the Guru wanted to create a mighty force in world history—as a temporal vehicle of the Spirit—for introduction a new societal order, free from evil, injustice and inequity, free from political discriminations and economic disparities, free from creedal

exclusiveness. What was aimed at through the founding of the Khalsa, through the motor force of a new dispensation with a distinctive corporate identity, was the creation of a new world order characterized by pluralism—religious, cultural, economic and political.

Though the five, baptismal symbols define the individual identity of a baptized Sikh, yet their connotations are universalistic in nature. The five baptismal symbols are known as the five *Kakaars* (the five k's) : uncut hair; comb; steel bracelet; short drawers and sword. These five *Kakaars*, making the visible individual identity, are symbols and not rituals or totems; their ritualistic wearing, without realising and imbibing the underlying spirit, is homologous to Brahminical tradition of putting on *tilak* (sacred mark on the forehead) and *janeu* (sacred thread) rejected by Sikhism. The uncut hair symbolise the integrality of being, emphasized by the post-modern holistic view, as against the old dualistic view. The comb stresses the value of cleanliness and purity in personal and social life. The steel bracelet stands for the experiential presence of the Divine whose beginningless and endless infinity is represented by the circular shape of the symbol. The wearing of short drawers connotes chastity as well as the Sikh rejection of the ascetic tradition that equated nudity with the natural condition of man; this symbol also stands in sharp contrast to the Brahminical practice of wearing unstitched lower garment (dhoti). The sword is not a combat weapon for offensive or defensive action; it is rather, a symbol of liberated being, of sovereignty of man, homologous to the right of a sovereign people to keep the arms. Being symbols, what is important is not their external ritualistic display on the body, but the inculcation in the mind of their significance, their essence, animating the attitude, the deed, the very life of the faith-followers. These are the symbols reminding their wearer that he is to be *sachiar* (truthful living) in his obligation towards God; a *jujhar* (fearless fighter for a righteous cause) in his obligation

towards society and a *rehāt-dhar* (imbiber of enlightened code of conduct) in his obligation towards the community. These qualities together constitute the indivisible wholeness on the life of the Khalsa and its members; when the emphasis on the third obligation becomes accentuated at the cost of the two other ones, the five symbols become rituals emptied of their sense and essence.

The five baptismal symbols have deep significance on ethical, social and political levels; they imply a new proxies for individual and social life.

The sociological significance of the baptismal ceremony of *amrit* lies in its being a revolutionary way to dynamic equalitarian society. The baptismal *amrit* provided a new normative principle, process and channel to the lower classes for vertical mobility in their own right, without any sense of guilt about their respective self-identities, which, as such, were no more required to be suppressed and sublated into simulated behaviour-patterns of the higher caste group. Says Guru Nanak:

ਨੀਚਾ ਅੰਦਰਿ ਨੀਚ ਜਾਤਿ

ਨੀਚੀ ਹੂ ਅਤਿ ਨੀਚ

ਨਾਨਕ ਤਿਨ ਕੇ ਸੰਗਿ ਸਾਥਿ

ਵਡਿਆਂ ਸਿਉ ਕਿਆ ਰੀਸ

ਜਿਥੈ ਨੀਚ ਸਮਾਲੀਅਨਿ

ਤਿਥੈ ਨਦਰਿ ਤੇਰੀ ਬਖਸੀਸ

*(The lowest of the low castes,*

*The lowliest of the lowly,*

*I seek their kindship-*

*Why emulate the (so called) higher ones*

*Thy elevating Grace is .*

*Where the down-trodden are looked after).*

The lower castes and classes were, as such, provided an opportunity of vertical mobility upto the highest level. The new normative principle of social organisation introduction by the baptismal *amrit* made people realise their

essential humanistic identity with a sense of horizontal solidarity as co-equal members in the Order of the Khalsa which does not admit of fixed, stratified role performance, nor the caste-based differentiation of connubial and ritual functions.

The mission of the Khalsa, for which it was created under the Divine Will (ਆਗਯਾ ਭਈ ਅਕਾਲ ਕੀ) qua a community of the *sachiar*, the *juhhar*, the *rehat-dhar*, was not simply individual salvation in the world hereafter, or even individual redemption in the world here and now. The universal societal concerns of Sikhism-as distinct from the existential concerns of the Sikhs at any given point of time and place-constitute the mission of the Khalsa presaged by Guru Arjun, the fifth prophet, in the following words :

ਸਭੇ ਸਾਂਝੀਵਾਲ ਸਦਾਇਨਿ

ਤੂੰ ਕਿਸੇ ਨਾ ਦਿਸਹਿ ਬਾਹਰਾ ਜੀਉ

*(All are equal partners in Thy commonwealth, with none treated as alien or outsider)*

Here was a message for ushering in a new value-pattern, a new dispensation, based on the fundamental principles of equality, justice and compassion, liberty and fraternity; this was a divine manifesto for a new civilization on the pillars of humanism, liberalism, universalism and pluralism. Dualism of mind and matter, and epistemic dichotomy of the subject and the object-that have characterized the Western civilization of the past few centuries-are both transformed into the unifying life of the "Spirit-in-history"-a concept that provides a new normative basis for the emergence of the post-modern civilization, the first intimations of which, appearing in the Sikh thought over 500 year ago, became phenomenally manifest in and through the creation of the Khalsa about 300 years ago at Sri Anandpur sahib.

### 3. PHILOSOPHICAL POSTULATES

In the world's speculative thought, Sikh philosophy, in the medieval age, introduced a new revolutionary idea of far-reaching implication and futuristic significance. God in

Sikhism is not merely indeterminate Being, but also Creator Who created material world as well as time. Metaphysically this implied non-acceptance of the Vedantic eternity of time, which meant the continuation of a thing in its original self-same state of being (*sat*) eternally, without change, development or evolution. Further, God is also envisioned in Sikh metaphysics as the creative, dynamic Spirit (*Karta Purakh*), becoming determinate (*Sat nam*) in time, in history.

Much later, Hegel described the modern State (identified with the Prussian military state) as the highest expressional form of the Spirit. The democratic import of the Sikh concept stands contrast to the tendency towards autocracy and totalitarianism inherent in the Hegelian notion.

The traditional modes of revelation of God known to religion and metaphysics are immanence or reflection in space (nature); indwelling in soul and manifestation in the Word. With Sikh philosophy appears, for the first time in religious and speculative thought of the world, a new revelatory mode: the concept of descent of God in time, that is, the Spirit-in-history. The cosmic event (*Bachittar Natak*) at Sri Anandpur Sahib in 1699 AD marks the sacrament of the Divine descent *qua* the dynamic Spirit immanent and operative in history-the-Khalsa, in its generic sense, being the vehicle of the spirit.

Sikhism visualized a revolutionary re-structuration of society, as a step towards a new civilization distinct from the earlier Indic and the Hindu civilization in India, in particular. The Brahminical system had absolutized the concept of fixity in social organisation, wherein the place of each caste, with predetermined role-structure, as well as of the individual in the caste, was considered to be fixed a priori in hierarchical order given by the law of Karma. This system by transforming (in the language of Marx) "a self-developing social state into a never changing natural destiny", ensured stability and passive equilibrium, but at



the cost of internal dynamism and evolutionary élan. Seen in this context the role of a Hindu Avtar is a periodical restoration of the balance, whenever the passive equilibrium of society gets disturbed. (This involves the cyclical-devolutionary view of time—a species of spatial time—in which history is seen not as an ongoing directional process, but as a series of the flow and the ebb, occurring in cyclical periodicity). The Sikh Guru is not an Avtar, not only on the ground that God is not conceived of as incarnating Himself in human form, but also for the reason that he is the initiator of a new way of life in the dimension of directional time. (Path-Panth), involving innovative structural changes in society.

Brahminical society permitted only 'Positional mobility' of the lower castes in the hierarchical structure through a cultural process named 'Sanskritization' by M.N. Srinivas; a lower group having circumstantially gained power or wealth would try to emulate the customs, manners, rituals and even caste-denominations of the higher caste for being accepted at a higher rung in the hierarchical ladder. As observed by M.N. Srinivas, this process of sanskritization meant only "positional change for the lower group without any structural change in the system". In fact, sanskritization in a way reinforced the principle of fixed hierarchy in so far as it meant vertical mobility within the caste system. It was, further, retrogressive in that it diverted the lower stratum from self-acquisition of status and respectability in its own right, without losing the self-identity in the borrowed feathers of the higher class.

Sikhism played a revolutionary role on the sociological level in re-structuring society on equalitarian basis by rejecting the concept of hierarchical fixity as the tradition-honoured principle of social organisation which had received its axiological legitimation from the caste-system, which, in turn, had the law of *Karma* as its metaphysical basis.

The new revolutionary normative principle, introduced

by Sikhism and institutionalized in the Order of the Khalsa provides for a new kind of vertical mobility that ipso-facto involves an ongoing process of re-structuration of open society on equalitarian basis-a process that stands in sharp contrast to sanskritization that permitted selective vertical movement, while ensuring the foundation of the hierarchized, closed system of caste-based society and the concomitant caste-system.

## THE KHALSA—AN INTERPRETATION

S. K. BAJAJ

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A large number of historians have explained the phenomenon which led to the foundation of the Khalsa as a part of militarisation process to avenge the martyrdom of Guru Teg Bahadur or to fight against the Mughals who perpetrated this kind of suppression.<sup>1</sup> Basing their argument on this presumption, eminent historians like J. N. Sarkar, Farquhar and Arnold J. Toynbee are prone to believe that the establishment of the Khalsa converted spiritual unity of the Sikhs into a means of achieving "vulgar worldly ambition"<sup>2</sup> This certainly is a fragmentary explanation and does not embrace in its analysis the total integrated phenomenon as grasped by Guru Gobind Singh. All these versions<sup>3</sup> are based on the original given by Bute Shah in his *Tarikh-i-Punjab*.

Recent historians have tried to impart wider perspective to the creation of the Khalsa. Ganda Singh believes that the Khalsa was created to change the psychology of the people,<sup>4</sup> whereas Fauja Singh views it as a synthesis of *Bhakti* and *Shakti* cults.<sup>5</sup> J. S. Grewal asserts that Guru Gobind Singh's primary concern was with the claims of conscience "which must be defended against external interference and, if need be, with the use of physical force."<sup>6</sup>

Even A. C. Banerjee's comment is general rather than specific and exploratory when he observes, "The greatness of Guru Gobind Singh's experiment lay in the harmonious

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combination of the floating ideas and practices in a co-ordinated system which had a definitive objective in view, viz., the organisation of integrated, self-reliant and dedicated community pledged to destroy evils and sins and to extirpate tyrants."<sup>7</sup> W. H. Mcleod, in his lectures delivered in the Cambridge University, propounds a hypothesis that the creation of the Khalsa was a stage in the evolution of the *Panth*, resulting from the influence of the hill culture', where Guru ji had been for a long time, and 'culture of the plains'. So Guru Gobind Singh, in his opinion, simply infused military aspect to the existing religious tradition of the Sikhs "the Khalsa is best described as an order, as a society possessing a religious foundation and a military discipline."<sup>8</sup> Infact the Khalsa is much larger in scope—a new project of living, a strategy, a policy for the Sikhs.

From the analysis of the historical situation which prevailed in Punjab before the Khalsa, it is very clear that Guru Gobind Singh was vexed with the problem of survival of the community of which he was the leader. Internal stress and external threat had assumed such serious dimensions that the existing organisation and spirit of the Sikhs even of the people in general was inadequate to meet the challenge. Vexed with the problem to evolve a new project of living and thinking, he retired to the seclusion of Naina Devi Hills where he remained asorbed in "deep and apparently anxious thought."<sup>9</sup> "He seemed to be occupied with an unfathomable inner world and mystery. A stillness prevailed...a stillness which pre-figured the birth of a momentous event," writes Harbans Singh.<sup>10</sup> He conceptualised the total phenomenon and by distancing himself he could detect the powers outside and within him required for his project. It was not speculative or theoretical but a seasoned presentation of inter-connected factors with a practical end in view. The end before him was to relate knowledge to the right moral attitude and to man's freedom. His close connection with the people of hills and semi-agrarian societies of the plains and also his

understanding of their tradition and social organisation enabled him to perceive clearly the role of mythical thinking in preserving internal cohesion and facing external dangers.

Our knowledge of Guru Gobind Singh's past experience and of the post Khalsa period make one thing very clear that while in seclusion he grasped the essence of things. He resolved his problem by integrating action inspired through mythical thinking, with self-generating, self-operating social organisation of the semi-agricultural tribes with the moral values and philosophical concepts of Sikhism.

The total view which Guru Gobind Singh developed required him to establish right ordering of human existence<sup>11</sup> with that of society. This further required basing the Khalsa on value system which was anti-thetical to the one prevailing in society. Contrary to the tyrannical, suppressive, unjust and exploitative social system, the Khalsa was to uphold the values of fellow-feeling, sympathy and just and egalitarian social-system. Thus there were two antagonistic projects of living; one was liberal, free, open and just, with positive moral values and other conservative, closed, oppressive and tyrannical.<sup>12</sup> So we can argue that the Khalsa was created to promote the historical mission, i.e., the value system introduced by Guru Nanak.

To integrate those values with the life style and thinking of the Sikhs, it was essential to create a permanent identity of ones being a Sikh, the upholder of those values. In other words, this identity of the external form was meant to establish links with the mental awareness of an individual. The integration of the internal phenomenon of values with the external form of his own self, and through the latter with the rest of the community. Guru Gobind Singh created a heightened sense of awareness. Hence the Khalsa had common values and common future for all its members.

Internal solidity and cohesion in the Sikh community was not merely based on external identity of form. While

creating the Khalsa, Guru Gobind Singh cut across the kinship relationships of tribes and castes. He organised them into a society which was open, but in forming relationship between the individual and the community, he based it on the social structure of the semi-tribal agrarian societies where there was less differentiation of status and position. Members in these societies were free and equal with the rest of the members. As in tribes, there was greater emphasis on equality in social behaviour within the members of the Sikh community; greater equality of status for women, and a strong sense of corporate identity and self assured life in contrast to subservient mentality common in the large caste system<sup>13</sup> These features of the Sikh social structure and attitude tended to develop a great sense of corporate independence as it remove the protestant flavour of individualism, the emotional climate of psychological dependence, self-abasement and other worldliness. But the essence of the movement—humility, self-abasement for the sake of fellowmen and constant remembrance of God's name were retained.

One of the unique features of the Khalsa is that the act of will to do something was bound with the Khalsa which stood for higher values. The members of the Khalsa were not to endeavour or wish or desire or covet for something which in their opinion was good, but on the contrary they considered that something was good that they were endeavouring, desiring or coveting. That something constituted the ideals of Khalsa. Such an attitude made action obligatory on the part of the Sikh and prepared him to make sacrifices to achieve those ideals.

The problem which has baffled historians is to comprehend technique which Guru Gobind Singh adopted to achieve that end. Being a poet of great calibre, Guru Gobind Singh, by his acute perception realised that awareness of the situation which confronted them could be created in mythical terms and not in historical terms for it was only in the former that they could be aroused to

action.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, he took large number of ideas and institutional designs from the rural communities of the *Jats* and low-caste groups and integrated them with the values and philosophical concepts of Sikhism.<sup>16</sup> New concepts were again transformed into mythetical notations.

To achieve his end of arousing people to action of the type described above, Guru Gobind Singh adopted the popular cultural media which emphasizes total sensory awareness, a high level people's participation and emotional religiosity. *Chandi-di-var*<sup>17</sup> and *Bachittar Natak*<sup>18</sup> are texts, which should be analysed from the angle of popular media. Some historians have tried to interpret them in terms of the contemporary situation.<sup>19</sup> Our purpose here is to explain the need and validity of this kind of literature in relation to the Khalsa. Written in the local dialects with suitable modifications for the semi-agricultural communities which had romanticized view of the world, these compositions were drawn from the epic and puranic traditions with a view to arouse empathy and multi-levelled and multi-sensuous awareness which ensured furious activation of the participants. The recitation, of these compositions made the participants see the mythical world as very mysterious where supernatural forces were always at work. They saw that everything was inspired which in turn helped them to be better prepared both mentally and spiritually to fight the evil as they realized their awareness through images and symbols subsumed in myths. These mythical stories, moreover, formed overpowering manifestation of powers of good and, evil which, made the Sikhs to experience their creative effect. The recital of these mythical stories particularly that of *Chandi-di-Var* thus provided purpose to the current enterprise of the Sikhs. This explains why Guru Gobind Singh while writing a finis to *Krishanavtar*, said : "I have cast into the popular tongue the story of Bhagwat. This I have done with no other purpose. Lord, except to glory the holy war."<sup>20</sup> It was a sort of psychedelic technique used for bringing about a complete

mental change. About *Chandi-di-Var* Harbans Singh writes, "Such is the impact of this poem that people in the Punjab have a superstition and will be chary of reciting it first thing in the morning least it should arouse them to warlike action. But the *Nihangs* and others heroically inclined read it regularly and drive great inspiration and spirit from it."<sup>21</sup>

Guru Gobind Singh created a new metaphor—the metaphor of the sword. The sword was the symbol of *Shakti*, Durga and of God himself for. He is described as *Sarbloh*, or All-Steel. Guru Gobind Singh attached great significance to the sword which is evident from his writings'. In the *Bachittar Natak*, he writes, "Hail : hail to the Creator of the world, (The Saviour of creation, my Cherisher) Hail to thee, O Sword; "In his *Jaap Sahib*, he says," I bow to thee, Lord, who art the weilder of the sword, "In the preamble to the Sikh *Ardas* it is said, "Having first remembered the sword, meditate on Guru Nanak....." The sword was attributed divinely qualities as the scourge of the evil (*Darmat Darnan*), protector of saints (*Sukh santan Karnan*) and even the creator (*jag karnan*). This attempt to create myth in sword was made so that the Sikhs, the possessors and the weilders should experience strange divine energy which the sword manifested. By this the Sikhs were enabled to secure a future course of action against any kind of risk.

After having been inspired by tremendous psychic power, a Sikh with a sword was required to be controlled and disciplined from within himself, as the Gurus themselves had been doing. Therefore, Guru Gobind Singh made wearing of five symbols obligatory for every Sikh so that they all appear alike in the image of the Guru himself. Their form and the significance of the symbols constantly kept them aware of the mission of their lives which was no different from that of the Guru.<sup>24</sup> In a way, it was designed to create a feeling that he had transferred divine powers collectively in them. This explains the reason for his saying. "The Khalsa is the Guru and Guru is the Khalsa."<sup>25</sup> Bearing



not only created heightened awareness and removed all differences among the Sikhs but also in times of need and emergency took possession of them as psychic powers take possession of the dancer who while performing rain dance begins to feel that he is the rain god.

It would not be entirely conjectural to believe that the organisational aspect of the Khalsa reveals many features which are common with those of the semi-tribal agricultural clans and low caste communities, which enjoyed greater social freedom as they were less differentiated.<sup>26</sup> Their cohesion was based on mythical thinking. On the basis of the early nineteenth century evidence one can say with certainty that in Punjab the democratic communes existed in its most perfect form. As a large number of the members of these communities had come into the fold of Sikhism before the creation of the Khalsa, it can be safely surmised that Guru Gobind Singh having witnessed the fact that these communities had faced challenges of the caste society and the aggression of the high centralised bureaucratic government of Delhi adopted that organisational model for the Sikhs. The most important features of the clan or community organisation were (i) supremacy of clan or community (ii) equality of status among the members (iii) existence of *Panchayat* as an institution to regulate the affairs and direct the conduct of the members of respective communities. Guru Gobind Singh's surrender of his authority to the Khalsa signifies the supremacy of the Khalsa over the individual member. From the *Panchayat* or the *Panch Parmeshwar*<sup>27</sup>, an institution well entrenched at that time, he acquired the idea of establishing the institution of *Panj Piyaras* (the five beloved ones), which inherited the authority of the Guru to conduct the affairs of the *Panth*. As he did not want the Sikhs to deviate from the word of the Guru, he integrated the *Adi Granth* with the community of the Sikhs while in deliberations.

The Khalsa was a dynamic institution for it was and even at present is a self-perpetuating and self-operating

apparatus which can go into operation at all places where the five Sikh gather. It radically transformed the outlook of the Sikh movement. It made 'will' to act an unconditional duty. It created enormous spiritual energy which inspired them to willingly submit to the norms of the Khalsa and accept their unwanted consequences. Based on heroic tradition, the value which developed thereafter have heroic style about themselves. The creation of the Khalsa was intended to transform the spirit of man by arousing heightened awareness of his being, by making him conscious of great energy for achieving higher and permanent values of life.

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. J. S. Grewal, *From Guru Nanak to Maharaja Ranjit Singh*, Amritsar, 1972, pp. 58-60. According to the author, the early chroniclers (Ghulam Muhiyidin *alias* Bute Shah, *Tarikh-i-Punjab*; Saina Pat, *Gur Sobha*; and Sukha Singh, *Gur Bilas*) relate the creation of the Khalsa to "the idea of revenge, political ambition and the episode of the goddess."
2. Even Ravindra Nath Tagore agreed to the assessment of Toynbee, *A Study of History*, Oxford, 1961 Reprint, Vol. VII, p. 75. See A. C. Banerjee's *Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh* (New Delhi, 1978), chapter XII on "Sir J. N. Sarkar on Sikh History;" J. D. Cunningham in his *History of the Sikhs*, Delhi, 1966, Reprint, p. 66; G. C. Narang, *Transformation of Sikhism*, New Delhi, 1970, 5th Edition), pp. 79-80. He says that Guru Gobind Singh's mission was to foster national sentiment. J. N. Sarkar in his *History of Aurangzeb*, Vol., II Chapter XXXV does not substantially deviate from the theme of revenge and the Sikh-Muslim conflict.
3. A. C. Banerjee, *op. cit.*, pp. 276-81, Guru Gobind Singh is reported to have said at Keshgarh congregation that it was a mandatory wish of his father to avenge his murder. This idea has been rejected by A.C. Banerjee.
4. Ganda Singh, *Sikh People*, Calcutta, 1959, p. 25.
5. Fauja Singh, "Development of Sikhism under the Gurus" in *Sikhism*, Patiala, 1969, pp. 31-35.
6. J. S. Grewal, *op. cit.*, pp. 58-60.
7. A. C. Banerjee, *op. cit.*, p. 236.
8. W. H. McLeod, *The Evolution of the Sikh Community*, Delhi, 1975, pp. 2, 4, 13.

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9. A. C. Banerjee, *op. cit.*, p. 236.
10. Harbans Singh, *Guru Gobind Singh*, Chandigarh, 1966, p. 69.
11. Guru Gobind Singh in the *Bachittar Natak* writes, "I have taken birth for this indeed, let all good people understand, to promote the law, to redeem the saints and uproot evil from the land." See Sant Singh Sekhon, *The Unique Drama*, Chandigarh, 1968, p. 42; G. C. Narang says Guru Gobind Singh was impressed by the idea of saviour appearing from time to time. He got this idea from the puranic literature and presented it in the *Bachittar Natak* in such a way as to produce apocalyptic impression on his followers, *op. cit.*, pp. 82-84.
12. After founding the Khalsa, Guru Gobind Singh addressed to his followers, "I wish you all to embrace one creed and follow one path, obliterating all differences of religion. Let the four Hindu castes which have different rules for their guidance abandon them altogether, adopt the one form of adoration and become brothers. Let no one deem himself superior to another. Let men of four castes receive my baptism, eat out of one dish and feel no disgust of contempt for one another." See Harbans Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 76.
13. Richard Lannoy, *The Speaking Tree*, New York, 1971, p. 183.
14. Besides a large number of references in the writings of Guru Gobind Singh to this effect and besides the Sikh tradition of adhering to higher values of life, we find in the new names given to the first five baptised, are parable of virtue (Dharam), Clemency (Daya) enterprise (Himat), fortitude (Mohkam) and gentleman (Sahib). See, Sant Singh Sekhon, *op. cit.*, p. 23.
15. Guru Gobind Singh's rendering of the tenth chapter of the *Gita* into beautiful and simple Punjabi was done in order to arouse people to action. See Clinton H. Loellin, *The Granth of Guru Gobind Singh and the Khalsa Brotherhood*, (Lucknow, 1971), pp. 70-71. In *Krishanavtar* he writes :

I have cast into the popular tongue the story of Bhagwat  
This I have done with no other purpose,  
Lord, except to glory the holy war.

In the *Krishanavtar and Ramavtar*, he builds up a powerful lure in mythical images and impressions for creating will to fight and martial fervour.
16. According to Irfan Habib the Jats of Punjab were pastoralists turned peasants proprietors who could not be integrated with the hierarchical structure of the caste societies. The absence of social and economic stratification attracted them towards the Sikh Gurus. They, alongwith them, brought thier culture patterns, See Irfan Habib, *Proceedings of the Punjab History Conference*, 1971, Patiala, 1972. Presidential Address of the Medieval Section. Also see McLeod, *op. cit.*, pp. 11-14. His

tentative hypothesis is that the Khalsa was the fusion of three currents, viz, religious tradition of the Jat tradition and the Shakti cult of Shivalik hills.

17. *Var Sri Bhagauti Ji Ki*, popularly known as *Chandi-di-var* resurrects the Puranic legend of Chandi or Durga. Written in 1684, *Chandi-di-Var* is Guru Gobind Singh's "first composition and only major work in the punjabi language. Few poems in the Punjabi literature equal *Chandi-di-Var* in virility of tone and structure.....Its magnificent martial candences and vivid imagery aptly recapture the sounds and fury of battle scene. The emphasis is on the image of Goddess Durga which, through the poetic imagination and fervour of its creator, attains reality and firmness helping its mythical origin". See Harbans Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 37. A great part of Guru Gobind Singh's compositions is not concerned with the Sikh cannon. They are based on popular myths of Hinduism. For details, Sant Singh Sekhon "Guru Gobind Singh's Prayers" in *Transactions of the Indian Institute of Advance Study*, Simla, 1967, Vol. VII on Sikhism and Indian Society, p. 165 (Hereafter referred to as *Transactions*).
18. Guru Gobind Singh completed the account of his life i.e., *Bachittar Natak* (The Unique Drama) in 1698 about a year before the creation of the Khalsa. Based on the Hindu mythological texts. The *Bachittar Natak* traces the origin of human race and the two Khatri gotras, *Bedi* and *Sodhi*, and the reason of his own birth not as incarnation but as a servant of God. The narration of most of the events of his life are sketchy and dramatic. They are explained with mythical illusions.
19. According to Sant Singh Sekhon, "The accounts of these battles (four or five earlier battles which the Guru fought against the hill rajas and the Muslim commanders of Lahore or Delhi) are again not of historical nature. In his opinion they are just metrical recitations of courage and valour," *op. cit.*, p. 4.
20. Harbans Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 49.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 37.
22. Translations by Harbans Singh, *Ibid.*, pp. 46-47.
23. Five symbols of Sikhism—*Kes*, *Kanga*, *Kuchh*, *Kara*, and *Kirpan* signify virtues of Sannyas Yog, Grihasta yog and Rajya yog. See J. P. Singh Uberoi "On being Unshorn", in *Transactions*, *op. cit.*, p. 100.
24. A. C. Banerjee, *op. cit.*, p. 237.
25. Some of the recent scholars particularly sociologists find it difficult to identify the basis of the Khalsa organisation. They tend to make general statement. For example Ethne Marengo writes, "The Khalsa had unique features designed to weld disparate peoples of the lower castes into a highly motivated fighting unit". *The Transformation of Sikh Society*, New Delhi, 1978, p. 26.

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- 26.** Louis Dumont, *Religion, Politics and History in India*, Paris, 1910, pp. 123-24. He has analysed the writings of Campbell and Maine on village communities of India.
- 27.** The *Panchayat* operated as an authority in the rural communities. In Punjab they were well established. These Panchayats acted on behalf of the community to preserve its customs, practices and law and order. They acted as custodians or trustees. They were not above the total community.

## CREATION OF THE KHALSA : FULFILMENT OF GURU NANAK'S MISSION

SHIV KUMAR GUPTA

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Historians have eulogized the great merits of Guru Gobind Singh in whom were united the qualities of a religious leader, a writer and a perfect swordsman. In the words of Latif, "He was a law giver in the pulpit, a champion in the field; a king on his *masnad* and a *faqir* in the society of the Khalsa."<sup>1</sup>

The history of the Sikhs, after the death of Guru Tegh Bahadur, assumes a new aspect, Guru Govind perceived that the times had changed and was consequently determined to keep pace with them. He saw that the passive conservatism of his ecclesiastical predecessors was not suited to the time and did not tend to the diffusion of the religion. He, therefore, instituted a new code of law which not only treated of religious subjects but infused a spirit of valour and emulation into the minds of his followers and inflamed their zeal for deeds of heroism and bravery in the field." Guru Gobind Singh "taught a doctrine suited to the troubled state of his mind, and called upon his followers, by every feeling of manhood to lay aside their peaceable habits, to graft the resolute courage of the soldier on the enthusiastic faith of the devotee to devote themselves to steel, as the only means obtaining every blessing, that this world or that to come, could' afford to mortals."<sup>2</sup> Guru Gobind Singh brought this revolution by the creation of the Khalsa.

The word 'Khalsa' has linguistic and historical origin.

Linguistically it is a word of Arabic language which means 'pure'. In the history of Mughal India it was a word used for the land owned by the Government. The word 'Khalsa' was used by Guru Gobind Singh in this sense. All the Sikhs who had direct relation with the Guru were called The Khalsa. Since Guru Gobind Singh wanted that the Sikhs should deal with the Guru direct without any intermediary; they are the land of the Guru, Sikhs as such were to be called the Khalsa. Guru Gobind Singh invited the Sikhs to Anandpur Sahib and transformed them into the Khalsa.

The word Panth, which carries a special significance among the Sikhs; means collective personality, On joining the community each member surrenders his natural rights to the collective whole; each individual puts his person and all his power in common under the supreme direction of the General will. Similarly all Sikhs, by surrendering their will to the 'Common will' or collective personality become one with it. "Before passing into the infinite, Guru Gobind Singh wound up the institution of Guru and handed over the whole power to the 'Panth' in the presence of the Holy-Granth. Thus 'Panth' became the supreme body. So 'Khalsa Panth' is a combination of two concepts 'Khalsa' and 'Panth'. It is thus a collective personality of all the Sikhs who have direct relation with their Guru.<sup>3</sup>

In the creation of Khalsa., it is generally believed that a sudden and completely new turn was given to Sikhism by Guru Gobind Singh.

Hence the question which some western and Indian scholars have posed and tried to answer is whether changes effected under Guru Gobind Singh were in conformity with the spirit of the teachings of Guru Nanak and the succeeding Gurus? Whereas some of these scholars have misunderstood the development of Sikhism in its proper perspective others have gone deep into the Sikh thought and institutions and found its development in true perspective.

According to Forster "The sicque nation is composed of two distinct sects, or orders of people, those who compose

the most ancient one are denominated Khualasah; and adhere with little deviation, to the institutions of Nanock and the eight succeeding priests;..... The modern order of the sicques, entitled Khalsa, was founded by Gobind Singh; who deviating from the ordinances of his predecessors, imparted a strong military spirit to his adherents,....."<sup>4</sup> According to Malcolm, "It was reserved for Guru Gobind Singh to give a new character to the religion of his followers, not by making any material alterations in the tenets of Nanac but by establishing institutions and usages, which not only separated them from other Hindus but which by the complete abolition of all distinction of caste, destroyed at one blow, a system of civil polity, that, from being inter woven with the religion of a weak and bigoted race, fixed the rule of its priests upon a basis that had withstood the shock of ages." Malcolm further says, "The spirit, which he infused into his followers, was handed down as a rich inheritance to their children, who though they consider Baba Nanak as the author of their religion, revers, with a just gratitude Guru Gobind, as the founder of their worldly greatness and political independence."<sup>5</sup> "The object he attempted was great and laudable. It was the emancipation of his tribe from oppression and persecution, and the means which he adopted were such as a comprehensive mind could alone have suggested."<sup>6</sup> According to Wilson 'Nanak Shahis' and 'Gobind Shahis' are two different sects of the Sikhs. "To succession of the Sikhs of the son of Tegh Bahadur, Guru Gobind constitutes the most important era in the political progress of the Sikhs. He, in fact changed the whole character of the community, and converted the Sikhs of Nanak, the disciples of a religion of spirituality and benevolence and progressors of a faith of peace and good will, into an armed confederacy, a military republic."<sup>7</sup> Major A. E. Barstow has also expressed similar views. According to him "His teachings were calculated to convert the followers of Guru Nanak with a militant body—Religious fervour, however, was entirely



To Pincott, "The tenth and the last Guru completely changed the constitution of the Fraternity..... He does not seem to have troubled himself with points of doctrine; his chief care was to re-organise the society on a fighting basis to enable it better to contend with the Mohammad antagonists. For this purpose he converted the whole body into an army which he named the Khalsa; that is the 'pure; and conferred upon each member of the body his own name 'Singh' or 'Lion'."

Even J. N. Sarkar has also formed an opinion similar to all these western scholars cited above. According to him "Guru Gobind Singh organised the Sikhs to suit a special purpose. He called in the human energy of the Sikhs from all other sides and made it flow in one particular channel only; they ceased to be full free men. He converted the unity of a religious sect into an instrument of political advancement. Hence the Sikhs, who had been advancing for centuries to be men suddenly stopped short and became mere soldiers."<sup>10</sup>

Hence, "Guru Gobind Singh has more than once been accused by certain scholars of having sacrificed the religious and spiritual aspects of the 'faith' and the discipline to the temporal needs of the hour" and "thus deviating from the great ideal of Guru Nanak for their having transformed a purely pietistic faith and society to a militant and crusading one directed towards temporal ends."<sup>12</sup>

In fact all these scholars have tried little to study the times and circumstances in which the Guru had to take to arms. "An analysis of Guru Gobind Singh's writings shows very clearly that he was only elaborating in the context of the somewhat different socio-political situation, what Guru Nanak stood for in his own time and space."<sup>13</sup> A few of the scholars, who really ventured to go deep into the study to find the truth, their efforts have not gone in vain. They have definitely realised the spirit of the times as also of Guru Gobind's mission. An analysis of their findings can certainly

lead us to a definite conclusion which can lay at rest the misgivings of certain scholars who arrived at their conclusions without adequate study of the contemporary situation of the times Guru Gobind Singh lived in. Perhaps this could not have been better explained then in the words of Duncan Greenlees. According to him, "Circumstances in the country had changed greatly; Indian was under the ruthless bigotry of Aurangzeb, and there was no constitution which could protect her people from his brutalities, under him Hindus had no legal rights, their temples were burned, and they themselves subjected at any moment to forcible conversion, massacre or at least heavy poll-tax and fines. There was nothing else to do but to submit like cowards or to resist like men; the Guru was forced into resistance by the incessant attacks of jealous Hill Rajas, who could not tolerate the rise of Sikhism beside them."<sup>14</sup> Defending Guru Gobind's action to take to arms, Greenlees says that Guru Gobind Singh, "used violence and the swords, as the surgeon when all other means have failed takes up to knife. The evil of the day could be combated only in this way."<sup>15</sup>

How Guru Gobind Singh carried the message of Guru Nanak to a culmination could not have been better understood then by Gordon. According to him, "Nanak laid the broad foundations of religious reforms on which Govind built his militant doctrine to suit the changed times."<sup>16</sup>

Similarly Cunningham rightly felt the pulse of the times and concluded : 'The violent end and the injunction of the martyr Guru made a deep impression on the mind of Gobind, and brooding over his own loss and the fallen condition of his country, he conceived the noble idea of moulding the vanquished Hindus into a new and aspiring people.'<sup>17</sup> He further says, "By creating the Khalsa Guru Gobind Singh roused the dormant energies of a vanquished people and filled them with a lofty, although, fitful longing for social freedom and national ascendancy the proper

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adjuncts of that purity of worship which had been preached  
by Nanak."<sup>18</sup>

According to Batley Scott "Guru Gobind Singh's teachings differ little from those of Nanak but he was about to institute a great change." It was in a large assembly that the Guru told, "Henceforth they would no longer be individual Sikhs, but one mystical body—the Khalsa—God's chosen in which would reside the soul that had been in Nanak and in all the Gurus."<sup>19</sup> Bingley also agrees that, "His (Guru Gobind Singh's) creed was in many respects the same as that of Nanak. The God, the Guru and the Granth remained unchanged. But, while Nanak substituted holiness of life for vain ceremonies, Gobind Singh demanded brave deeds and zealous devotion to the cause as a proof of faith."<sup>20</sup> Dorothy Field has studied this point at length and explains, "It will be seen that the work of Gobind Singh was some what different to that of the other Gurus. His special task was to protect the sect at a moment when it might have perished, and for this work, he is worthy to stand by Nanak, the founder of the whole movement."<sup>21</sup> But at the same time he cautions, that 'It must not be imagined that because he was a fine warrior, he was less spiritual or less religious than his predecessors. He made religious fervour the backbone of all his warlike doctrines. He united practical skill with mystical meditation; and the results speak for themselves. He wrote very many hymns, which, setting aside those in praise of the sword, contain a stronger vein of pantheistic mysticism, than do those of the other Gurus. He also made greater claims for himself as prophet."<sup>22</sup> Moreover says Dorothy Field, "The teaching as to warfare appears only in the Granth of the Tenth Guru—that is in the hymns of Gobind Singh. But we have seen that martial tendencies were not altogether foreign to the Sikhs before that time. Nanak's simple view of life, his teaching as to health of body, and the special purity of his sect, had all paved the way for what was afterwards a political development. There was no sudden change in

doctrine as the Sikhs began to take up arms. Gobind Singh quite naturally grafted his praise of the sword and his promises of rewards for valour on to the quietistic doctrines of Nanak."<sup>23</sup>

Understanding Guru Gobind Singh's mission, C. H. Payne has also observed that "It was no part of Guru Gobind's object to displace the teachings of Nanak, but rather to adopt it to the new needs of his people."<sup>24</sup> "He not only reaffirmed the absolute equality of every Sikh in the eyes of God, but he altogether prohibited the observance of caste distinctions within the Khalsa. Like Nanak Gobind attached the utmost importance to purity of life, but on a level with it he placed brave deeds and devotion to the Sikh cause."<sup>25</sup> Similarly Bingley has written that the tenth Guru "openly attacked all distinctions of caste and insisted on the equality of all who would join him; and resuscitated the old baptismal rite of the Sikhs, he proclaimed it as the *Pahul*, or gate by which all might enter to fraternity, while he gave to its members the *Parshad* or communion as a sacrament of union in which four orders of Hindu society should eat from the same dish."<sup>26</sup> Bingley rightly concludes that, "Perceiving the great national weakness resulted from the discussion caused by caste, he proclaimed the social equality of all who were members of the Khalsa."<sup>27</sup> According to Pincott, "Guru Gobind Singh abolished caste distinctions not in theory but brought it in practice by admitting members of all castes to his army."<sup>28</sup> Dwelling on the same point Dorothy Field says, "By its power men who had hitherto been regarded as unclean and polluted from their birth, were changed into exceptionally fine warriors. Before the time of the Sikh Gurus no general could have dreamed of raising an army from such out-castes; and this metamorphosis was accomplished despite the hidebound prejudice and innate conservatism of the Hindus."<sup>29</sup> Payne has also understood Guru Gobind Singh's emphasis on equality. According to him, "He not only re-affirmed the absolute equality of every Sikh in the eyes of God, but he

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altogether prohibited the observance of caste distinctions within the Khalsa."<sup>30</sup> According to Trumpp, "Guru Gobind Singh did not and could not essentially change the teachings of his predecessors : The changes and additions he made in Sikhism concerned chiefly the ceremonial and social duties of all adherents; as he received men of all castes and creeds into the Khalsa and endeavoured to weld them into one religious and political body."<sup>31</sup> According to Macauliffe, "Stimulating precepts of the tenth Guru altered what had hitherto been deemed the dregs of humanity into warriors whose powers and loyalty never failed their leaders."<sup>32</sup>

Syed Mohammad Latif has also observed that "Govind perceived that the times had changed, and was consequently determined to keep pace with them. He saw that the passive conservation of his ecclesiastical predecessors was not suited to the time and did not tend to the diffusion of the religion. He, therefore, instituted a new code of law which not only treated of religious subjects, but infused a spirit of valour and emulation into the minds of his followers and inflamed their zeal for deeds of heroism in the field."<sup>33</sup>

From the above discussion emerges a question whether the Khalsa arose logically and naturally out of the foundations laid by Guru Nanak and his immediate successors or it was a super imposition which utilised the foundations for an entirely different purpose. According to Indu Bhushan Banerjee, "At first sight it may seem that the religion of Guru Nanak and that which Guru Gobind Singh preached were radically different. Nanak had preached 'Love of Mankind', Gobind preached 'punishment of the wicked'. Nanak's ideal had been to remain ever absorbed in the love of God and drink the nectar of the Name; Gobind called upon his Singhs to sing God's name in the mouth but to meditate was in heart and for the nectar of the name', he seems to have substituted 'the nectar of Pahul! Nanak's motto had been 'humility and prayer', Gobind's 'self-assertion' and extirpation of tyrants." Nanak

had aimed at spiritual freedom, while Gobind emphasised political advancement and military glory."<sup>34</sup> But such a superficial comparison ignores some of the basic facts of the situation and the actual forces at work. "The fact was that Guru Gobind Singh recognised the change that occurred by the entry of the *Jats* in the Sikh fold during the time of Guru Arjan and Guru Hargobind." According to Banerjee, "The Khalsa was a compound of the Sikhs and the *jat*; the Guru had united the religious fervour of the Sikh with the warlike temper of the *jat*."<sup>35</sup> "All that the Sikhs held dear, all that they had been taught to revere, love of God, obedience and service to the Guru, and love for each other, were to be satisfied by serving the Khalsa where in were involved all their social and religious aspirations."<sup>36</sup> Indu Bhushan Banerjee rightly concludes, "Guru Gobind Singh had not in any way, given up the essentials of Guru Nanak's teachings, which formed, as it were, the core of Sikhism. We find in his teachings, as in that of Guru Nanak, the same insistence on the worship of the one True Lord, The same idealisation of devotion and surrender, and the same glorification of the name."<sup>37</sup>

A. C. Banerjee also observed "Militarisation was quite in consonance with Guru Nanak's teachings on fearlessness."<sup>38</sup> Guru Gobind Singh's leadership made the Sikhs feel that they had become capable of responding to Guru Nanak's never forgotten call for fearlessness." According to Banerjee "The emergence of the Khalsa was indeed the fulfilment of Guru Nanak's mission in changing circumstances."<sup>39</sup> Moreover "In Guru Gobind Singh's writings there is ample evidence pointing to close identity between his ideas and those of his predecessors. Difference of emphasis arose solely from the peculiarity of his circumstances."<sup>40</sup> "There was, however, no real deviation from the essence of Guru Nanak's teachings. In the tenth Guru's compositions we find the same insistence on the worship of the one True Lord, the same idealization of devotion and surrender and the same glorification of the

Name as we find in Guru Nanak's hymns."<sup>41</sup> On the other hand, "Duncan Greenlees has rightly commented that, "His (Guru Nanak's) great courage in so boldly speaking out open criticism of the foreign government on one hand and Islam and Hinduism on the other, wherever he went shows us that "he was no milk-and-water moon baby but a true predecessor of that great hero Guru Gobind Singh."<sup>42</sup> W. Owen Cole has also observed that "the tradition is that it was Guru Gobind Singh who armed the Sikhs and turned the pacifist Panth of Guru Nanak into the militant brotherhood of the sword, the Khalsa. This is a gross over simplification."<sup>43</sup>

According to Annie Besant "Fundamentally religious in its beginnings, it was forced by the pressure of circumstances into a militant organization."<sup>44</sup> Duncan Greenlees further elaborates, 'If we go deep into the study of the hymns of earlier Gurus as also Guru Gobind Singh's *Bachitra Natak*, we find that the doctrine of the essential unity of all the Gurus with Guru Nanak is taught." "From Nanak himself, the first form of the Guru, who taught the whole truth, down to the beloved martyr-hero Tegh Bahadur, and through him to his son Guru Gobind—all alike were equally inspired, ensouled, by the same great teacher. Those who understand this truth are on the path to the true understanding of religion as revealed to the Sikhs."<sup>45</sup> R. E. Parry, a British army officer, attached to a Sikh Battalion also formed a similar opinion. According to him, "He (Guru Gobind Singh) accomplished by preaching the Khalsa, attacking caste, instituting Pahul and five outward signs and thus forming a brotherhood bound together by the sword." To Him, "Gobind did not attack the doctrine of Nanak but added to it."<sup>46</sup> Archer says, "But with all his military order he exalted above warfare the devoted worship of true Name."<sup>47</sup> According to Khushwant Singh "Like Nanak, Gobind Singh believed that the sovereign remedy for the ills of mankind was *nam*—a life of prayer. He did not alter its form of prayer—the Adi Granth

remained the scripture."<sup>48</sup>

There is no denying the fact that the details such as baptism or some organizational duties introduced by Guru Gobind Singh are the facts of history and a credit to his genius. But any attempt to suggest, inter alia, that this signifies a change in the doctrine or general moral precepts of the Sikhs, is something going beyond the reality.<sup>49</sup>

To be decisive on the point we have to take into consideration "Whether the teachings of the first Guru, Nanak Dev, had the potentials of this development which culminated with the tenth Guru." A brief survey of his teachings reveals his unflinching faith in one God. Guru Nanak believed in a formless God—immanent and transcendent. To him God is omnipotent. He found no use in idol worship; instead emphasised on the repetition of the 'True name or Sat Nam.' He also emphasised on the importance of guru in attainment of God. According to him 'Without the Guru no one has attained god; God is the raft or the ladder' which enables man to reach his destination. 'Guru Nanak's message to his audience was 'Abide pure amidst the impurities of the world.'" He wanted his followers to shun asceticism and renunciation. Instead he asked them to lead a householder's life. Love of God implied love of whole mankind. Guru Nanak bitterly denounced caste system based on inequality and gave the message of universal brotherhood. He vehemently denounced empty ritualism in religion, penance, pilgrimages, fasts and all sorts of superstitions. To him all these practices were false and meaningless.

On the other hand a careful analysis of Guru Gobind's writing makes it clear that they were not different from the teachings of the earlier Gurus. Guru Gobind Singh "was only elaborating in the context of a some what different socio-political situation, what Guru Nanak stood for in his own time and space." *The Japji* of Guru Nanak and the *Jap Sahib* of Guru Gobind Singh are often said to be similar and correspond to each other."<sup>50</sup> Moreover *Adi Granth*, is the



authentic Granth of the Sikhs and Singhs since it is the book Guru Gobind Singh is said to have appointed to the Guruship in his place."<sup>51</sup> "The official book of worship and discipline does not mention the Dasam Granth but says their scripture is the Guru Granth Sahib (The Adi Granth) and the words of all the ten Gurus."<sup>52</sup> The particular name of God which has such an appeal and fascination for him, is descriptive of one aspect of his infinity. Akal or the Timeless. This existed already in the creed of Guru Nanak's Japji."<sup>53</sup>

A careful analysis of the Dasam Granth reveals that "Guru Gobind Singh believed in the suppression of all faiths by the faith enunciated by Guru Nanak; he subscribed to the idea of the unity of Guruship from Guru Nanak to Guru Tegh Bahadur; and he regarded himself as their only true successor." Moreover "Like Guru Nanak, he believed in one God, the creator the sustainer and the destroyer of the universe. He also believed that God exalts the pious and destroys the wicked. In the universal struggle between the forces of good and evil, God intervened from time to time to restore the balance in favour of the forces of good."<sup>54</sup>

"Guru Gobind Singh believed that he was a chosen instrument of God. This providential role he was to fulfil in his own way as the successor of Guru Nanak. In terms of this historical situation, his problem was to defend the claims of conscience against external interference. Guru Tegh Bahadur had given one answer to this problem. Guru Gobind Singh proposed to give another. His aim was to obviate external interference with use of physical force. For the fulfilment of this purpose he had to set his own house in order, that is the panth founded by Guru Nanak."<sup>55</sup>

According to Richard Fox, "Sikhs who underwent the baptism ceremony (pahul) instituted by Guru Gobind Singh called themselves 'Singhs' but otherwise continued within the religious traditions of Guru Nanak."<sup>56</sup> It were only the martyrdoms of Guru Arjun and Guru Tegh Bahadur at the orders of Mughal rulers which "convinced this growing

sect of peaceful religiously minded people of the need to add the sword to the rosary as the symbolical equipment of their faith."<sup>57</sup> That is why Puran Singh has rightly epitomized, "Guru Gobind Singh is Guru Nanak at the climax of his spiritual glory."<sup>58</sup> If certain people "Give him up as something not as spiritual as Guru Nanak—if they cannot see Guru Gobind Singh as the highest, brightest culmination of Guru Nanak, assuredly they do not at all understand that king of Revolution of religious thought, the Great Guru Nanak."<sup>59</sup> "A Sikh, at the height of his spiritual glory, after taking Guru's Amrit, is known as Khalsa. A Sikh who lack spirituality and does not live according to the ethical code of Guru Gobind Singh ceases to be a Khalsa."<sup>60</sup> Khazan Singh has not said in vain that "The succeeding nine Gurus, of whom the tenth and the last was Guru Gobind Singh, had the Divine light of Guru Nanak handed on to them as the flame of one lamp light another. The tenth Guru poured that light into the Khalsa commonwealth and raised his followers to the same spiritual elevation as himself, and thus removed all distinctions between man and man, leader and follower, high and low."<sup>61</sup>

Guru took up the sword and armed his Khalsa with it. Why? Guru Gobind Singh expresses in the *Zafarnama* written to Aurangzeb :

"When all other alternatives fail, it is right and just to take up the sword for the defence of Dharma or righteousness." "The Khalsa wields the sword as a shield to defend and protect the weak and the oppressed, to uphold truth and righteousness, and to defend the country. Sword in Sikhism has never been used for the gratification of 'self', for material gains at the cost of sufferings of others. It has always been used for freedom of conscience, freedom of worship and for protection of Dharma."<sup>62</sup>

"He who keeps the light of the Divine Life,  
The Torch of Truth,  
Burning for all the twenty-four hours,

In the shrine of His heart,  
He alone is to be deemed  
As the pure Khalsa."

The creation of Khalsa is the culmination of Guru Nanak's genius. According to G. C. Narang :

The harvest which ripened in the time of Guru Gobind Singh was sown by Guru Nanak and watered by his successors. The Sword which carved the Khalsa's way to glory was undoubtedly forged by Gobind, but the steel had been provided by Nanak.<sup>63</sup>

In fact Guru exhibited no bitterness or frustration and never swerved an inch from the path of righteousness; he fought ceaselessly against oppression, tyranny and injustice. Guru Gobind Singh founded the Khalsa to fight for religious purity and justice and founded a tradition of belief in both 'Bhakti' and 'Shakti'; Bhakti of God and his creation, and Shakti to fight against evil and tyranny. Guru always prayed :

'O God, grant me this boon,  
That I swerve not ever from thy righteous path,  
that fear overtakes me not  
When I fight my enemies.  
And, yet, when I fight, I fight to win,  
That I am instructed by no one but my higher mind,  
That I crave ever to sing thy praise.  
And when cometh the evening of my life,  
I die fighting in the thick of a holy war."

(Sawayyas)

Thus Shakti was not craved by the Guru for any personal gratification. It was just to save Bhakti propounded by Nanak. Moreover Guru strongly felt, under the circumstances that sword was the last resort to secure equality of justice. Guru Gobind Singh enjoined upon the Khalsa to ever remember God, in peace as well as in the thick of battle. It was he who taught them that to die in the cause of God or righteousness, is the highest attainment that a human being can aspire to. He himself prayed :

"O Lord, grant me this very boon,

That I may never evade doing righteous deeds;  
 That when I go to fight my enemy,  
 Let not fear enter my heart.  
 So that I may make my victory certain,  
 And I instruct my own mind on this,  
 That I may ever desire to sing thy praise;  
 And when the span of life reacheth its end  
 I may die valiantly in the thick of the holy war."

*(Chandi Charitra)*

Guru Gobind Singh always exhorted his Khalsa to concentrate only on the Eternal supreme Being. He wrote :

"Meditate, therefore, on the external Supreme Being  
 Who ever was, still is and shall ever be."

*(Sawayyas)*

God enshrined Himself in Guru Nanak's heart. The same Divine light illuminated the minds of his successors. This transformation from one Guru to the other happened spontaneously. "In the formation of Sikh religion, the important factor is that there was the direct divine inspiration experienced by Guru Nanak and his nine successors, who by their personal contact with God's power made Sikhism living faith and strong weapon with which to fight the battle of life."<sup>64</sup>

Guru Gobind Singh inherited the rich tradition founded and inherited by Guru Nanak Dev. It was a tradition of humanitarianism, social equality, justice and universal goodwill. He emphasised that all men irrespective of their race religion, caste and creed were equal. Following the tradition set by Nanak, Guru Gobind Singh exalted the common men to a high position and ascribed all his deeds and achievements to his followers. The song, he sung was, the song of the masses :

Whatever exalted position do I have,  
 It is all bestowed on me by the Common folk.  
 Otherwise millions of humble men like me,  
 Are confined to oblivion, unheard and unnoticed,  
 All the battles that have been won,  
 It was their arms that smate the foe.

Guru had unflinching faith in God—"Faith in one God of All, specially the Poor, the weak, the sinned against."

"The Sigh of the trampled ant, says the Guru, reaches the seat of the Lord God much earlier then death reach the grant of the injured elephant and that the Lord God is the worshipper of the Poor—Gharib—al—prast."

(Zafarnama)

According to C. H. Payne Guru Gobind Singh "Not only re-affirmed the absolute equality of every Sikh in the eyes of God, but he altogether prohibited the observance of caste distinctions within the Khalsa."<sup>65</sup> "The higher castes naturally murmured at these reforms and many of them left him but the lower orders rejoiced at the new dispensation and flocked in numbers to his standard."<sup>66</sup> Guru Gobind Singh's motto was :

*Manas ki jat sab ek he pahchanbo*  
(Know all mankind as one)

Guru Nanak's sect, according to Charles Gough was "entirely religious, without any political aim or organisation, based on two fundamental principles. "The unity of God and the Brotherhood of man, without distinction of race, caste or creed."<sup>67</sup>

Guru Gobind Singh "declared himself the last of the Gurus in whom individually the spirit of their great founder Nanak should reside; from thenceforth the spirit of the Guru would live in the body of the Khalsa, wheresoever five Singhs were gathered together, there would he be present in their midst. Sudra and Brahmin, warrior and husbandmen, all alike were brethren and comrades in the Khalsa."<sup>68</sup>

"The Khalsa grew mightily—to the great anger of orthodox Hindus, who were furious at the ending of caste slavery among so many and the uplifting of Harijans to the level of Brahmin converts."<sup>69</sup> Guru Gobind Singh "gave almost daily speeches instilling brotherhood, equality, highest bravery and ethics among the Sikhs." "He used at times to visit the Guru's kitchen in disguise and so he learned

with what contempt the cooks treated poor and destitute comers. In this and other such ways he maintained justice and equality, laying down very strict rules that the free kitchen was open to all comers, and not only to Sikhs.<sup>70</sup>

"Khalsa was forged as an instrument of good for the world. Wherever, there was a Sikh, there was a garrison of defence for the weak and the lowly."<sup>71</sup>

Hari Ram Gupta has also studied this question at length and is of the firm opinion that Guru Gobind Singh did not introduce any change in the essential principles established by Nanak. He made certain changes in their interpretation. According to him, "Guru Nanak's God was the Creator, sustainer, Bestower of gifts, Embodiment of Kindness and love. To Guru Gobind Singh God was in addition the wielder of arms, punisher of the evil doers, destroyer of the forces of the wicked and liberator of mankind; Nanak's remedy for human ills was Nam or prayer, Gobind Singh added action to prayer. Action implied good living accompanied by determination to fight evil to a finish; Nanak preached love and goodness for all, good and bad, Gobind Singh preached goodness for the good and retribution for the rogue; Nanak wanted his followers to be saints, Gobind Singh wished them to be saints and soldiers, Nanak had aimed at spiritual freedom, Gobind Singh added to it political freedom, without which spiritual freedom was impossible; Nanak laid emphasis on Bhakti, Guru Gobind Singh combined Bhakti with shakti. He even introduced the sword in the Sikh prayer. "Having first remembered the sword, meditate on Guru Nanak", Nanak had prescribed *charanpahul* for initiating his disciples, Guru Gobind Singh administered to his Khalsa sweet water stirred with a double-edged dagger in an iron vessel, and added Singh to their names, Guru Nanak had invested the Guruship in man, Guru Gobind Singh invested it in the Holy Granth for all times to come in order to avoid all possible family feuds as well as imposters and to check any division in Sikhism."<sup>72</sup>

According to Khushwant Singh, "In its essential beliefs Gobind introduced no change. His Sikhism was that of Nanak, believing in one supreme creator who was without form or substance and beyond human comprehension. He condemned the worship of idols. He gave the institution of Guruship a permanent and abiding character by vesting in the immortality of the Granth and the continuity of the Khalsa Panth."<sup>73</sup> According to him "The only change Gobind brought in religion was to expose the other side of the medal whereas Nanak had propagated goodness, Gobind Singh condemned evil. One preached the love of one's neighbour, the other the punishment of transgressors. Nanak's God loved His saints; Gobind's God destroyed His enemies."<sup>74</sup> But there is no denying the fact that in all this "Guru Gobind Singh resolved to complete the work begun by Guru Nanak and carried on by his successors. He decided to create a body of men, self-contained and compact, who would be strong enough to free themselves from the oppression of priests and rulers, and to maintain the freedom thus achieved. In doing this, he was not, in any way, departing from the principles taught by his predecessors. On the contrary, he was simply building on the foundation laid by them. In fact, he considered the mission of his predecessors to be one and the same, and regarded his own mission as the consummation thereof."<sup>75</sup>

"Awakening his countrymen to a new and noble life, and arousing their latent energies to a sense of common duty, he blended the undaunted courage of the soldier with the enthusiasm of the devotee and inspired the peaceful ploughman with ideas of military glory and national aggrandizement."<sup>76</sup> According to Latif, "Composed in mind and matured in experience he resolved to reform religious corruption and to put an end to social abuses and depredations."<sup>77</sup> According to Fauja Singh, "The commonwealth of Gobind Singh was a socio-political order with its base resting on spirituality and moral values or a corporate body of people who, deriving from religion

strength as well as inspiration aimed at bringing about a social and political revolution of which the hall-mark were equality, justice and liberation."<sup>78</sup> There seems to be no denying the fact that, "Although Guru introduced a new ideology, it was not a departure from the old ideals preached by Guru Nanak and his successors. His Sikhism in essence remained the same as ordained by Guru Nanak. It was Guru Nanak's mission that was preached by Guru Gobind Singh. Nanak's objectives were made the basis of Guru Gobind Singh's programme. Guru Nanak had given the inspiration and placed some ideals before his disciples, Guru Gobind Singh showed the practical ways to achieve them."<sup>79</sup>

Hence, the creation of the Khalsa by Guru Gobind Singh was the greatest achievement of his genius. It laid the foundation of brotherhood which produced in the fullness of time, men of uncommon bravery unique devotion and rare spirit of sacrifice."<sup>80</sup> There is no denying the fact that the Khalsa created by the Guru was inspired by a sense of divine mission to right the wrongs of the world; and in the discharge of his duties, no fear of earthly power was to stand in his way. The spirit of the Khalsa was so strong that "Even those people who had been considered as dregs of humanity were changed, as if by magic, into something rich and strange, the like of which India had never seen before."<sup>81</sup> According to Cunningham "By creating the Khalsa, Guru Gobind Singh roused the dormant energies of a vanquished people and filled them with a lofty, although, fitful longing for social freedom and national ascendancy. The proper adjuncts of that purity of worship which had been preached by Nanak."<sup>82</sup> But in doing that, Guru never went astray from the path shown by his predecessors. Guru Gobind Singh gave sword in the hands of the Khalsa not to establish any political power but to defend the weak and the downtrodden and to destroy the armies of the wicked and the tyrants. He inherited and fully identified himself with the religious, social and political



ideology of the preceding Gurus. In fact in the creation of the Khalsa, lay the fulfilment, the culmination of the foundation of the Khalsa commonwealth ideal dreamt and put forward by Guru Nanak.<sup>83</sup>

Guru Gobind Singh himself has very clearly brought out in his autobiography :

Foolish and ignorant people consider  
All Sikh Gurus to be different in mind and spirit,  
Few enlightened saints and seers.  
Have comprehended them to be one in spirit,  
Only those who understand this eternal truth,  
Acquire spiritual enlightenment and perfection,  
Without understanding this mystical truth,  
One cannot achieve any spiritual perfection.

(*Bachitra Natak*)

So Guru Gobind Singh very emphatically says that whoever thinks one Guru of the Sikhs was different from the other is an ignorant fool. "Undoubtedly he succeeded in transforming a supine and a frustrated people who had resigned themselves to a defeatist mentality and had accepted the despicable role of fatalists who dared not stand up."<sup>84</sup> "Whatever else he might have been Guru Gobind Singh was first and foremost a great religious leader. None but a person of saintly disposition, highly spiritual and with a complete resignation to the will of God, could have behaved as he did during the most acute crisis of his life."<sup>85</sup> "Guru Gobind Singh successfully completed "The revolution" which had been initiated by Guru Nanak."<sup>86</sup> Hence in the creation of the Khalsa lay the fulfilment of Guru Nanak's Mission.

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## CREATION OF THE KHALSA : THE LEGACY

GURBACHAN SINGH NAYYAR

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Much has been said and written by scholars regarding the creation of the Khalsa by Guru Gobind Singh and its legacy. The opinions of at least some of them ought to be examined for analysing the salient features of this significant institution of the seventeenth century.

An early nineteenth century British historian regards Guru Gobind Singh as a founder of political independence.<sup>1</sup> A modern Sikh writer states that Guru Gobind Singh believed in going far beyond the position of Guru Hargobind Singh and to establish a parrallel Government.<sup>2</sup> A modern historian argues that Guru Gobind Singh infused political consciousness in the Sikhs to knit them together into a national brotherhood to defend the religion and the country<sup>3</sup> A present day Sikh writer believes that Guru Gobind Singh was guided by a truly religious spirit in taking up arms against the Mughal Government in order to dethrone tyrannical rulers who were oppressing his countrymen.<sup>4</sup> Sir Jadunath Sarkar believes that Guru Gobind Singh transformed the Sikhs into 'mere soldiers.'<sup>5</sup> Sir Gokal Chand Narang opines that Guru Gobind Singh added the sentiment of nationalism to religion.<sup>6</sup> It has been argued by a British writer that Guru Gobind Singh made religion a stepping stone to political power; his aim was the formation of a formidable confederacy of Sikhs and the destruction of Muhammadan power in the Punjab.<sup>7</sup> In view of the above arguments and diversity of opinion we have to reconsider

the issue of the creation of the Khalsa the master and unique creation of Guru Gobind Singh.

There is a story in religious tradition that Adam (The mortal being) was not created by God, the Almighty in a single attempt. It took Him two hundred and thirty years to shape and frame Adam. After shaping his whole structure God asked all to bow before him. Whereas the gods under His command obeyed the order and instantly bowed before Adam, the Devil refused to submit to the command. Resultantly, there ensued a constant warfare between Adam and the Devil for all the times to come. Guru Gobind Singh created the Khalsa exactly after two hundred and thirty years after the birth of the founder of the Sikh religion to struggle against fanaticism and tyranny which had reached its climax under Emperor Aurangzeb who was well known for his rigid religious views.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, the sad plight of the common man, prevailing corruption, whims and superstitions generating an earnest conviction in Guru Gobind Singh's brain to save suffering humanity.

It is pointed out that Emperor Aurangzeb was the last arrow in the quiver of Islam.<sup>9</sup> This statement may be interpreted to mean the climax the fanaticism had reached under Aurangzeb but it does not in any case reflect any feeling of animosity between the Sikhs and the general Muslim public. We know that in the Sikh-Mughal wars during the pontificate of Guru Gobind Singh Muslims helped the Sikhs from the core of their hearts. The instances of Gani Khan and Nabi Khan, Pir Buddu Shah and several of the like are very much there to prove into the past history, instances like those of Sain Mian Mir laying the foundation of the Harmandir Sahib, Amritsar, the Mecca of the Sikhs under the advice of Guru Arjan Dev are there.

Aurangzeb's religious prejudices, of course, served as a milieu to the creation of the Khalsa. Before reviewing the factors responsible for the creation of the Khalsa it is in the fitness of things to delineate the very causes of the fanaticism of Aurangzeb. Leaving aside everything which emerged

from his personal whims and fanatic and orthodox approach, Aurangzeb had a greivous problem to face. He had got his hold over the throne of his father by imprisoning the latter and killing his real brothers. He had been apparently accusing Dara Shikoh, his elder brother for his liberal views and the most convenient alternative of giving consolation to the Muslim orthodoxy to win their favour was to stamp out non-Muslims to ensure his stability on the throne, He gradually intensified his campaign against the non-Muslims. He found the security and stability of his position in taking repressive measures against the 'infidels.'

Guru Gobind Singh thus, as a ninth successor of Guru Nanak found himself in such a situation in which he wanted to relieve the fear stricken and the down trodden masses suffering under the yoke of tyranny and narrow patriotism for centuries together. His was, as a matter of fact, a herculean attempt to unleash a specific movement for putting an end to the inhuman, tyrannical and bigoted sovereignty. At the same time he showed no co-operation to evil. Those who had the tendency to lead people astray whether Hindus or Muslims were considered evil doers. The common people irrespective of their castes or creed were all regarded sons of the Almighty. Cunningham observes and rightly too : (Guru Gobind Singh) thought that the minds of men might be wrought upon to great purposes, he deplored the corruption of the world, he resented the tyranny which endangered his own life, and he believed the time had come for another teacher to arouse the latent energies of the human will. His memory was filled with the deeds of primaeval seers and heroes, his imagination dwelt on sussesive dispensations for the instruction of the world, and his mind was not perhaps untinged with a superstitious belief in his own earthly destiny. In an extant and authentic composition, he traces his mortal descent to ancient kings and he extols the piety of his immediate parents which rendered them acceptable to God. But his own unembodied soul, he says, reposed in

bliss, wrapt in meditation, and it murmured that it should appear on earth even as the chosen messenger of the Lord—the inheritor of the spirit of Nanak, transmitted to him as one lamp imparts its flame to another.<sup>10</sup>

Let us observe the problem of Guru Gobind Singh from another angle also by way of interpreting his mission for the creation of the Khalsa. During the past, as we observe from our sanctified religious literature, in the realm of faith God, the Almighty was supposed to come to the assistance of his *Bhagtas* or devotees. Such was the concept. But now contrary to the past, Guru Gobind Singh quite logically envisaged that the *Bhagtas* must extend protection to themselves for securing their hearths and homes and for defending the claims of conscience. He prescribed weapons of warfare for them for the purpose of using them at the time of exegency instead of depending on mystical help of God. In his letter written to Emperor Aurangzeb he clearly wrote that when all other alternatives fail it is justified to take to arms.<sup>11</sup> He elevated the spirits of his devotees so that they might work havoc in the battle field. Let us study a few instances to observe the concept that God offered shelter to his devotees in the crucial hours of misry and alarm.

Emperor Muhammad bin Tuglak wanted his contemporary Nam Dev, a *bhagta* or devotee wrap up in meditation and devotion to God to perform a miracle of reviving a slaughtered cow if he had the confidence in his all pervading and all potent Lord. The conversation between the *Bhagta* and the Emperor is inserted in *Adi Sri Guru Granth Sahib* in the composition by Bhagta Nam Dev :

The Emperor said 'Here thou, O Nama let me see the doings of thy Lord

The Emperor had Nama arrested and said, "Let me see thy beloved God

Restore to life this slaughtered cow, otherwise I shall strike off thy head on this very spot

Replied Nama...Whatever the Lord does, that alone takes place

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(Nama was given three hours to reanimate the cow, otherwise he was to suffer death. At the eleventh hour the Lord appeared)

Uttered the Lord, "If thou sayest, "I may turn the earth on its side

If thou sayest, I may place it upside down

If thou sayest, I may restore the dead cow to life."<sup>12</sup>

The episode portrays how God came to the rescue of the devotee at the hour of need. A number of such instances are found in our religious literature like those of Bhagt Parlad, Kubai etc. Albeit, Guru Gobind Singh, contrary to the past concept taught his disciples to protect themselves with weapons. Of course, the injunction for the Khalsa to wear arms has to be seen in connection with Guru Gobind Singh's concept of God, the Almighty. He worshipped ordinary weapons of war.

The arrow and the bow are You.

The shield and the sword are You.

They all attain to salvation who worship You.<sup>13</sup>

Guru Gobind Singh said elsewhere :

To wear the sword is to absolve one self of a million sins.<sup>14</sup>

The baptism of the sword administered to the Khalsa on the eve of the creation of this institution on the Baisakhi of 1699 implied that the Khalsa after taking the baptism belonged to God (*Wah Guru ji ka Khalsa*) and the victory of the Khalsa was the victory of divine righteousness (*Wahguru-ji-ki-Fateh*). Hence the man in the street, the down trodden and the poor irrespective of any caste or creed whom the contemporary society had condemned became Godly-being and the saint-soldier. So far as the mode of testing the Sikhs adopted by Guru Gobind Singh on the historical Baisakhi of 1699 within the tent itself is concerned, the holy Guru might have adopted any method and posed any problem through the test conducted by the Great Guru. There is a strong tradition that the guru asked the congregation to offer their heads for the cause of the faith. Later writers have duly followed this tradition.

The five beloved ones chosen out of the thousands

present at Anandpur Sahib belonged to the so called lower classes. They were initiated into the Khalsa brotherhood through the baptism of the two edged sword and were bound with a strong conviction that they were the chosen instruments of the Almighty. They were instructed to say good-bye to man made castes. The Guru himself bowing before them was baptised by them thus becoming a part and parcel of the Khalsa brotherhood. Sainapat, a contemporary and one of the fifty-two poets of the court of Guru Gobind Singh talks about the injunction of the Guru to abstain from taking tobacco and to keep unshorn hair as a part of the *reht* prescribed by the Guru for the Khalsa. Later works, however, give in detail the prescription of the Five Ks for Khalsa. The Khalsa, thus came to have a separate identity. The world famous historian Toynbee had remarked that a Sikh is perhaps the most beautiful of the creation.<sup>15</sup>

Thus, in a very short time a new people were born with enthusiasm to create the brotherhood of saint-soldiers. In order to galvanize the new Khalsa Brotherhood the names of all the members of the community were to end with the word 'Singh'. The Guru further strengthened the bond of unity by means of novel and unique devices which have stood by the Sikhs since the historic day of the creation of the Khalsa. The spirit thus injected by Guru Gobind Singh in the newly created Khalsa is fully reflected from his own writings. He prays to Almighty to bestow upon him the determination enough to enable him not to falter in doing good deeds. He should not have even a tinge of fear facing the foe in the battle field. He should always be confident of winning a victory with his mind directed towards the goodness of the Almighty. He prays to God to place him in such a state of moral bliss that he may breathe his last in the thick of the battle in the pursuit of virtuous deeds.

The multiple qualities imbibed in the Gurus personality made him to work wonder in whatever field he touched. Whereas he proved himself a unique spiritual being, he

depicted the talents of a topmost patron of learning and his scholarship is unquestionable. In martial activity he went to the extent of teaching the Khalsa a mystery : 'All steel I worship you'. The Guru's humanitarian attitude towards his temporal concerns beggars description. The *Sawayyas* and the rest of his compositions in the *Dasam Granth* reflect the depth of his feelings of humanity. He considers the temples and the mosques as one. All men are basically the same but mistakably appear different. They are of one build...a compound of earth, water, fire and air. He bestows all honour to them who are seekers of the basic truth in life.

The Guru further makes a point that all those are blessed who applaud Him and repeat His Name. Men who seek the truth of God's Name include men of numerous countries and nations viz. the Arabians, the Kandharis, the Marathas, the English, the French, the Marathas, the Bengalis, the Oriyas, the Chinese, the Tibtans, the Gurkhas, the Manchurias. The Khalsa created by him is a part of the whole creation and the credit of ushering such type of socialism in the world goes to Guru Gobind. The Khalsa is privileged to practically impose this philosophy on him in real life since he is taught to believe in equality and shun all the distinctions. How could those who believe in the rigidity of caste system and inequality seek *sarbat-da-Bhala*.

The Khalsa was taught to be united as a one single whole shunning all whims and superstitions and the bonds of languages etc. Thus, the Khalsa was made the embodiment of *Ahl-e-Kitab*, *Ahl-e-Zaban*, *Ahl-e-Markaz* and *Ahl-e-Wattan*. The practical import of all the salient features of the creation of the Khalsa is that the Khalsa was created by Guru Gobind Singh as an apostle of all virtuous qualities and the Guru is always at the beck and call of the Khalsa provided he remains within the limits suggested otherwise the Guru would cease to be his protector. This point has been made vividly clear by the Guru in his own compositions.

Let us wind up the discussion with the recapitulation

that the Khalsa was created by Guru Gobind Singh for the sake of *dharm yudha* and to discard evil in all the spheres of life may be within or without. We may define *dharm yudha* as a moral war of truth against untruth, war of the good against the evil. Saina Pat, one of the fifty-two poets of the court of Guru Gobind Singh also authenticates the *dharm yudha* concept when he says that the Khalsa was created to annihilate the wicked and to safeguard righteousness.

The creation of the Khalsa by Guru Gobind Singh left a deep legacy which may be made a point of inquiry here. The most significant effect of the creation of the Khalsa lies in the fact that a great number of people took the baptism of sword and became ever ready to do and die at the altar of the faith. In fact the wearing of the sword did not necessarily mean *danga* or violence. The sword was to be used to stop violence but not to the extent that non-violence becomes sin for the society. It was, however, to encourage the philosophy of *deg* and *tegh*.

As a matter of fact, an army of God, the Almighty came into existence in the form of Khalsa to guard against everything which is evil and wicked and for liberalising the masses. Men from different castes, creeds and places came in the fold of Sikhism. The *Panj Pyaras* or the Five Beloved ones belonged to different classes and places. Himat (Singh) was from Jagnnath, Daya (Singh) belonged to Lahore, Sahib (Singh) from Bider, Mohkam (Singh) hailed from Dawarka and Dharam (Singh) was the inhabitant of Delhi. The disuaded and disolated people of weaker sections from far of places got a proper identity in the religious order of the Khalsa and came in the fold of equality, fraternity and liberty. They were the people who later on worked wonder in the Sikh-Mughal battles fought under the patronage of Guru Gobind Singh himself. It is nothing short of a miracle that the irregulars and untrained people galvanized by the creation of the Khalsa worked wonders in the battle field against disciplined and trained troops of the Mughal administration. The Guru has himself drawn a

vivid and attractive rather a realistic pen portrait of how his 'Singhs' or the 'Singhs in the making' surpassed the professional soldiers and commanders. Even the Guru's confectioner killed many a foe in the battle field with full confidence. It was because a new life had been infused in the dead bones of the people.

It was nothing beyond the legacy of the creation of the Khalsa that Banda Bahadur after receiving the baptism of sword was able to collect a huge number of peasantry of the Punjab against the tyrannical Mughals and laid the first sod of independence against the alien rule. Though Banda Bahadur's rule lasted for a short tenure yet the fact remains that it was a significant milestone in the history of freedom movement against the Mughals. The reliance of the volunteers on Guru Gobind Singh and the hope of the future greatness of the Khalsa resulted in the independent principalities came to be known as *misls* in the eighteenth century. But the formation of the *misls* was a direct out put of the wholesale and horrible persecutions and the hardships which they were destined to undergo in their struggle to oust the Afghans from the Indian soil.

Those were the gradual and constant adventurous attempts in the shape and form of martyrdoms faced by the Khalsa which ultimately resulted in overcoming the Mughal-Afghan supremacy. The establishment of monarchy under Maharaja Ranjit Singh and the sealing of the North Western border for ever by the great *Khalsa* General Hari Singh Nalwa during the regime of the Maharaja was another outstanding achievement of the Khalsa galvanized by Guru Gobind Singh.

The spirit imbibed in the Khalsa by Guru Gobind Singh for emancipating his followers from the oppression turned over a new leaf and enabled his Khalsa to establish a unique identity and to live with self reliance and dignity. The Sikhs responded gallantly to the crucial challenges from time to time simply because Guru Gobind Singh had redoubled their enthusiasm. In fact, the historic creation of the Khalsa

is very much responsible for the multi-revolutions which came in the vanguard of the Sikhs in various spheres of life namely religious, social, economic, cultural and political. The creation of the Khalsa was, in fact, a message to the whole world for the universal brotherhood of mankind.

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## KHALSA PANTH: IDEAL SOCIAL ORDER OF THE GURUS' VISION

DHARAM SINGH

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Sikhism is a way of life striving, ceaselessly and righteously, in quest of a just and human social order. No doubt, the Sikh Gurus were primarily spiritual preceptors and their teachings, as envisaged in their hymns included in the Guru Granth Sahib, are aimed at the spiritual perfection and ultimate union of man with the Real One. However, the Gurus at the same time made their spiritual sermons (hymns) the *vis-a-tergo* of their egalitarian and justice-oriented social philosophy. Through these teachings they envisioned an ideal social structure the microcosmic form of which has been the casteless and classless fraternity of Khalsa-Panth as created by Guru Gobind Singh on the Vaisakhi day of A. D. 1699.

No vision, however noble or ideal, is of any use to man unless some practical measures are taken to realize it in this very life and on this very earth. Sikhism which has the rare distinction of keeping close to each other the parallel streams of esoteric and exoteric life did make earnest endeavours to make the vision viable and realizable. The Sikh Gurus proclaimed in the form of hymns, certain precepts and institutions which helped put those precepts into practice. Some of the Gurus as well as numerous among the Sikhs made supreme sacrifices to defend these institutions so as to keep intact the basis of the society of their vision.

The days of Guru Nanak (1469-1539), the founder of the Sikh faith, were not those of peace and harmony. Within

the society, there were various kinds of social and religious conflicts and tensions. There was also the crisis of political domination of the Hindus (Jainas and Buddhists were, numerically speaking, in microscopic minority) by the military might of the Muslims. Interestingly, the latter originally came to India as traders and then invaders, but soon they became conquerors and made India their home. However, they could not be assimilated in the otherwise all-absorbing native Indian culture, rather they imbibed a hostile attitude towards it. Their hostility towards the native cultural and religious tradition not only caused a divide between the native subjects and alien rulers but also caused perpetuation of untold oppression and tyrannies on the former for quite a long time.

Prior to the arrival of Mughals a protracted struggle had gone on involving the Buddhists, Jainas and Hindus, and in the 12th century, Sankaracharya dealt a mortal blow to Buddhism in consequence of which Buddhism became almost extinct in the land of its birth. But his form of Saivism was challenged by the Jainas. Similarly, there were many conflicts and tensions among the different sects within Hinduism.

Crisis and conflicts were also evident in the vicious subjugation of a considerable section of society on the basis of caste. One, Hinduism tried to provide theological and clerical support to the idea of inherent inequality among mankind. The 'Purusa Sukta' hymn in the *Rig Veda*<sup>1</sup> was quoted in support of the four-fold hierarchical division of society as a result of which the Sudras, the lowest in the four *varnas*, were expected to be at the service of the other *varnas*, especially the Brahmins. Thus, economic inequality became the natural corollary of this social inequality. Second, the prevalent patriarchal values and structures also made the place of woman in medieval Indian male dominated society unenviable. People like Manu declared her an object of possession meant solely for the pleasure of man. Third, ritualism and formalism dominated the spirit of religion,



thus divorcing it completely from the realities of life. Fourth, the elite social values caused demeaning of manual labour. The task of performing odd menial jobs was assigned to the so-called low-born as an obligatory requirement whereas the high-ups enjoyed, as their divine right, the service rendered to them by the *sudras*. Fifth, the aggressive lust for power, pelf and position was such as the spirit of service and philanthropy was very rare to be found. Thus, religion caused isolation from, instead of identification, with people, with almost no endeavour to eradicate ills afflicting the contemporary society.

Since the present write-up is an endeavour to share with the reader the Sikh Gurus' "vision" of an "ideal" social order, let it be reiterated here that "vision" is always related to seeing beyond the present. In this "vision", all defects and short-comings of the present are eliminated. This is achieved by either improving and emphasizing the brighter aspects of the present or replacing the present with the new life patterns. Thus, the vision always relates to an ideal to be realized, and for this man has to struggle and strive.

The Sikh Gurus reflected deeply on the preceding and contemporary social values and structures and articulated their own social thought. Although they were as stated earlier, primarily interested in the spiritual perfection and ultimate union of *jiva* with the Real One, yet they felt the necessity of establishing a social order wherein the spiritual values held dear by them could survive and thrive. Thus, they made their spiritual teachings *vis-a-tergo* of the ideal social order of their vision. All their lives and the following Sikh history is a long saga of struggle for the realization of that vision.

The Sikh Gurus visualized and worked for a social setup wherein all are equals, with no prejudices or preference; where faith binds mankind together instead of dividing them into warring factions; where people sweat to earn their livelihood through truthful means and philanthropic intent; where feelings of love and compassion for mankind

in general are held high; and where woman is not looked down upon as an object of carnal desire but is respected as mother and sister. The vision of such a society was not a mere Platonic wish, but the Gurus provided us with the required values to base this structures upon and with the requisite will to strive for its realization.

The doctrine of unity of Reality is central to Sikh metaphysical thought. In fact, the entire gamut of Sikh philosophy is derived from this doctrine which also happens to be the basis of the idea of spiritual unity and ethnic equality of mankind. This latter doctrine is the central point in the Sikh social philosophy. This idea serves as the fount of all social values that help construct an ideal social structure which is an open and inclusive society and not a closed and exclusive society.

The Sikh scripture begins with the Mul Mantra which is believed to be the essence of the entire scriptural hymns and the first letter of which is *ikoankar*. *Oan* or *Om* is the name used for God in the Sikh canon as in the ancient Indian religious literature as well. However, Guru Nanak who composed the Mul Mantra prefixed *ik* to it. *Ik* is in fact a numeral and not a word; the connotation of the meaning of a word may change with the change in socio-cultural circumstances, but the meaning of the numeral is ever fixed. If the prefix *ik* denotes oneness of God, the suffix *Kar* signifies the creative nature of God. The God of Sikh conception is not *satchitanand* Brahman of Sankara's conception but He is the Creator-Lord. Thus, God, according to Sikh perception, is one, and he is the creator of the entire manifest phenomena. And, as creator He permeates throughout His creation, thereby lending spiritual character to the material world.

As for man, Sikhism considers him the acme of entire creation.<sup>2</sup> Sikh canonical literature states that the exterior (*deha* or body) of human beings is made of five perishable elements, but it contains within what is called *atman* or the life-force. This *atman* also called the sixth element which

the Divine One has put within the human body, is divine in nature. It has been called a particle of God and even identified with God also.<sup>3</sup> This divine nature of human beings also implies the spiritual unity of man. Unlike Hinduism which holds that human beings are inherently unequal because the four *varnas* into which the entire mankind is divided are born of the four different limbs of Brahman, Sikhism holds the view that all humans are spiritually one and thus ethnically equal. Thus, the metaphysical doctrine of the unity of Godhead gives birth to the ethnic equality of mankind, universal fatherhood of God to the universal brotherhood of humankind.

In the ideal social structure of the Sikh vision all human beings are equal among themselves and in His eyes. There is general rejection of the obnoxious caste hierarchy. Man's caste and status in society are not determined by the chance of birth in a particular family but by the deeds done here and now.<sup>4</sup> There have been examples in the past also when people from the so-called lower castes reached pinnacles of spiritual perfection. The untouchable Markandeya became a sage not because of his caste but because of his piety. Nearer at hand are the examples of Kabir (weaver), Ravidas (*chamar* or cobbler) and Namdev (*Chhimba* or calico-printer) who are among the contributors to the Sikh scripture. Guru Amar Dass makes an unequivocal statement as he says that caste and physical charms do not help man after death; the consequences in after-death life depend on the deeds done in this life.<sup>5</sup> In other words, man is made in the image of God, but to conform to this divine image, personal sanctification is essential : and, this latter is possible through good deeds done in the service of fellow creatures, caste and rituals being inconsequential in this behalf.

The concept of equality in the social set-up of the Guru's vision includes womankind as well. The differentiation of sex is no ground for treating her inferior to man and denying her any advantages, opportunities, facilities and positions. Though there have been several attempts by Hindu

reformists to raise her position to an honourable partner of man in society, yet they failed because the basic argument, as advanced by people like Manu, about her inferiority and impurity still stood. It goes to the credit of the Sikh Gurus that they included womankind in their doctrine of spiritual unity of man. Thus, in Sikhism, all human beings, men and women, of different classes and castes, regions and religions, colours and races are, in essence, one and therefore equal.

The Sikh attempt to uplift the social status of woman was, in fact, in keeping with the Indian indigenous cultural values. Prior to the arrival of the Aryans, who were patriarchal, Indian society was mostly matriarchal wherein woman enjoyed a place of prominence and honour. She was the head of the family as well as of the State. It is perhaps some of these tribal leaders all of whom were held in very high esteem because of their moral and spiritual values that took shelter in the isolated mountains when invaded by the superior might of the Aryans. These spiritually enlightened and morally pious personages who were earlier venerated as great warriors and rulers gradually came to be worshipped as goddesses. The early encounter of the Aryans with this kind of indigenous culture incited them to either eliminate or subdue this. The Aryans, thus, tried to gradually build up a new philosophical system. The Sankhya-Yoga era seems an attempt at synthesizing both the cultures; Prakriti, the female force, is enjoined with Purusa though the former is active and unconscious whereas the latter is inactive and unconscious. Passing through the period of Nyaya-Vaisesika when the female (goddess) became just a consort of the male God, the Aryan thought came to the Vedanta (Purav Mimamsa and Uttar Mimamsa) by when the conscious Prakriti had been downgraded to mere *maya*, a slave to all-powerful Brahman. This philosophical rationale could easily explain away the deterioration of the position of woman in society from head of the family in a matriarchal society to a mere temptress,

an object, a prisoner within the four walls of the house. The arrival of the Muslims put so many new inhibitions on her. The Sikh Gurus, though themselves of the Aryan stock, resolved to balance this by declaring woman equal to man in all aspects of life, as worthy of man's respect for being the mother of the mighty.<sup>6</sup>

The Sikh Guru did envision an ideal social setup and also suggested in their hymns and other wise some ways and means for the establishment of such an order. At the same time, they also established certain institutions so as to put their teachings into practice. As Guru Nanak went out on four of his preaching odysseys, (*udasis*) to share with the mankind in general the divine revelation he had received, he set up *sangats* or congregations wherever he went. The Guru travelled as far as Sri Lanka in the south, Bangladesh, Orissa and Karnataka in the east, Baghdad (Iraq) in the west and deep into the Himalayas in the north. The followers used to gather in these *sangats* everyday or at regular intervals. Every devotee in the congregation was treated as the image of God and no distinctions between them were made on any ground whatsoever. The meeting-place of these *sangats* was then known as *dharamsala*, the precursor to the modern-day *gurdwara*. It seems there were no buildings specially erected or known as *dharamsalas* : maybe, the devotees used to meet by rotation at the house of one of them. When Bhai Gurdas says that there was *dharamsala* in every home (*ghar ghar andar dharamsal*) where *kirtan* went on for ever (*hovai kirtan sada visoa*),<sup>7</sup> he perhaps refers to this very tradition. It was during the pontificate of Guru Hargobind that the term *dharamsala* was replaced by *gurdwara*. The institution of *langar* or community-kitchen originated almost simultaneously with that of *sangat*. In a society where rigidity of casteism and sectarianism segregated people from one another, these institutions were a revolutionary measure to translate the precept of human equality into practice. It was a useful medium of social integration between the king and the commoner, the prince

and the peasant.

The task of preaching such precepts and of advising people to put them into practice is never smooth. History stands witness that such preceptors have had to face the wrath of the contemporary degenerate rulers : the latter wanted them to accept the existing unjust order, but they preferred to tread the more difficult path of being revolutionaries aiming at its transformation into a just, egalitarian and human society. We find that Jesus had to die at the hands of the Roman authorities. The title on the Cross : King of the Jews made clear the reason for putting him to death—the political guilt. Although Jesus was accused of being a Zealot leader (the Zealots were narrow nationalists whereas Jesus had universal outlook, and he never participated in the Zealot Movement) yet the accusation was never fully established. What really brought pressure on the Roman authorities to crucify Jesus was the former's indifference towards the social life of the common people and the latter's constant attack of the State's apathy towards the needs of the masses.

Similarly, Guru Arjan and Guru Tegh Bahadur had to court martyrdom when the unjust and intolerant Indian rulers felt that as a result of the teachings of the Sikh Gurus the masses were getting conscious of the malady that had stricken the social existence. The initial phase of the Sikh growth passed off peacefully because of two reasons : one, Sikhism was still in its infancy, and second Emperor Akbar was liberal in his religious outlook and somewhat concerned for the welfare of the masses. Jahangir who ascended the Delhi throne a little later was, in personal life, given to wine and women. Excessive drinking had made him a physically wreck and he died of lung failure. He was also under the strong influence of some fanatic courtiers and Muslim ecclesiasts. He could not bear the popular image of any religious personage, and had got several of them put behind the bars, including two Muslim holy men of Sirhind.

Both Guru Arjan and Guru Tegh Bahadur had no

personal grudge against anybody, but both of them were given by the State the option to embrace Islam or face death with torture. They had to face all this as the authorities of the day which were watching with caution the popularity of their doctrine among the masses feared that social and political consciousness among the latter might one day transform into a strong challenge to their unjust and oppressive rule. Guru Hargobind and Guru Gobind Singh had to meet several military onslaughts, and in the process the latter sacrificed his own life and that of his aged mother and four young sons. In both the cases—the martyrdom of Guru Arjan and Guru Tegh Bahadur both of whom did not raise even a finger at the perpetrators of torture as well as the battles which Guru Hargobind and Guru Gobind Singh had to fight against the degenerate and unjust rulers of the day—the Sikh Gurus never sought any material or personal gain. What Guru Gobind Singh has said about the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur in his *Bachitra Natak* can be generalized for both these cases; he made the supreme sacrifice for the sake of *dharma* (righteousness), and he preferred to give away head to make compromises with the values he stood for.<sup>8</sup>

Even during the days of infancy of Sikh religion when Guru Nanak visited Multan, he was met on the outskirts of the city by leaders of different religions and sects with a tumbler full to the brim with milk, implying thereby that the society was already 'full to the brim' with varied religions and there was no scope for any new religion. The Guru is said to have put a Jasmine petal on the milk. The message was quite clear : the new faith founded by Guru Nanak was antagonistic towards none and it was to have a relationship of harmony and accommodation with all other religious traditions.

The compilation of the Adi Granth which was later on given the pontifical status<sup>9</sup> is another evidence of the Guru's vision of a society where people belonging to different religious denominations live in harmonious and peaceful

co-existence. The Sikh scripture enjoys the rare distinction of containing hymns not only of six of the ten Sikh Gurus but also of several other holy men belonging to Hindu and Muslim religious traditions. Just as all human beings are spiritually one and ethnically equal being essentially one with the Divine, all holy men and their pronouncements also convey essentially the same message. And, this message is to strive for the establishment of a social order which is just, equitable, exploitation-free and full of love and compassion. Here Good dominates over Evil, *dharma* dominates over wickedness and oppression, and morality dominates over convenience.

The creation of the Khalsa-Panth on the Vaisakhi day (30 March) of A.D. 1699 by the Tenth Master is viewed as the culmination of the Sikh movement as initiated by Guru Nanak and nurtured by the succeeding Gurus. All members of the Khalsa-Panth are obliged to live out their personal and social existence in conformity with a specified disciplinary code. In personal life; they must follow the spiritual doctrine as propounded in the Sikh scripture. They should have firm faith in the Real One, and remember Him with every breath. The constant remembrance of Divine Name helps in the elimination of *haumai* and realization of one's real self; It is this self-realization which enables man to realize his essential oneness with the Divine and his implicit spiritual unity with the entire mankind. This latter helps one develop a feeling of fraternity with all human beings. His social behavioural pattern is determined by the personal faith in the unity of Real One and His manifestation in the phenomenal plurality of the mundane existence.

The above references to the endeavours and sacrifices made by the Gurus to realize in this world what they had proclaimed in their utterances goes to prove that man must lead a life of righteous action. He must realize that God is with us not only in the quiet of our meditation but also in the struggles of life. The poor, shabbily dressed labourer



breaking stones on a roadside in the hot and humid sun is as near, if not nearer, to God as the priest singing hymns within the temple. In the Sikh social set-up, everybody should lead a householder's life of active involvement; Sikhism does not consider these a hindrance in the achievement of metaphysical ideal, rather they are considered the means to realize that end.

A correlate of this idea is the close interrelationship between religion and politics. A healthy relationship between the two would result in ethico-moral values overriding public life. However, if we divorce politics from religion, the former is sure to deteriorate into authoritarianism, oppression, injustice and exploitation. That is perhaps why the corrupt and degenerate set of politicians today want to view each of them in isolation of the other. In the ancient Indian set-up, we find healthy and honourable relationship between religion and politics. Chronicles of yore refer to the princes receiving their education from *rishis* and seeking from their teachers and former teachers advice on many a matter of political importance. Lord Krishna (the God-incarnate in the Mahabharata) did not remain indifferent in the conflict between the Kauravas (the degenerate political authority charged with cheating, conspiracy, usurpation, etc.) and the Pandavas (the sufferers) but sided with the latter. The Sikh Gurus also took up cudgles in favour of the helpless and the weak. *Kirpan* (sword), one of the five K's which a member of the Khalsa brotherhood must wear is a weapon of both offence and defence : offensive against the oppressor and defensive for the poor and the weak. Similarly, the *Khanda* (the double edged sword) which forms part of the Sikh emblem is also symbolic of these two functions. Guru Gobind Singh's fight against the hill chiefs and the Mughal forces need also be viewed from this perspective. Interestingly, Mahatma Gandhi who was not favourably inclined towards Sikhism and the Sikhs and whom all Indian politicians of different hues proclaim to be their role model agrees with the view. He accepts close

inter-relationship between religion and political by saying that "I cannot conceive politics as divorced from religion. Indeed religion should pervade every one of our actions."<sup>10</sup> He reiterates the same when he says the "Religious which takes no account of practical affairs and does not help to solve them is no religion."<sup>11</sup>

The Sikh Gurus hold that religion is embedded in society and that it is also the foundation of society. Religion plays a vital role in determining the kind of social set-up. Religion's relationship with politics determines the kind of polity and governance. As a Sikh poet and philosopher, Professor Puran Singh states : no self government of the people, by the people, for the people can be a substitute for the enlightened state with its direction towards the uplift of man who works and loves. In other words, no perfect political system can be of any use to the imperfect mankind. It was perhaps keeping this in view that the Sikh Gurus first tried to enlighten mankind. They gave us distinct ontological precepts with a view to making man in the image of God. It was for such realized selves that they gave a distinct polity which could ensure the establishment of an ideal socio-political structure.

Sikhism evolved in an era when the political establishment was feudal and monarchical. No doubt, the Sikh Gurus have made very strong and derogatory comments on the degenerate and despotic kings, but they have made no remark against the institution of kingship. The only pre-condition they impose on the king is that he should be worthy of the crown he wears. Only that king should sit on the throne who deserves it, proclaims Guru Nanak.<sup>12</sup> When the Sikh scripture condemns the oppression, injustice and exploitation in the political system, it is not the institution of kingship but the corrupt, unjust and oppressive incumbents on the throne and such other officials. This condemnation had also nothing to do with the caste or creed of the sovereign. The only qualification of a sovereign, as can be made out from several scattered

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references in the *rahitnamas* (Sikh code of conduct), is that he should realize spiritual oneness with his subjects and treat himself subject to the laws which he applies on them. For example, talking of marital fidelity, these *rahitnamas* put the same restrictions on man and woman, the prince and the peasant.<sup>13</sup>

However, the Sikh Guru's inclination towards republican values has been obvious from the very beginning. The succession to the pontifical office was not hereditary but on merit. The transformation of *sangat* into *khalsa* by Guru Gobind Singh was a very dramatic development in the history of the Sikh faith and tradition. Guru Gobind Singh's selection of the Five (*Panj Piare*) and then their equation with himself was a step of great theological importance. It was not only on the day of the creation of the Khalsa-Panth that the Guru submitted himself before the Panj Piare and sought the gift of *amrit* or baptism from them, but even after that there have been more than one occasion when the Guru submitted to the collective will of the Five. However, these republican values were much ahead of their time. Consequently, Sikhism faced the problem of their operationalization. That is perhaps why Guru Gobind Singh instructed Banda Singh Bahadur to go to Punjab and provide political leadership to the Sikh community. However, the Guru took care to send along with him five Sikhs (symbolizing the collective will of the Khalsa-Panth) to serve as a guide and check on him. Perhaps, the choice of the a single leader is indicative of the fact that the common citizenry was not yet vigilant and enlightened enough to successfully operate a democratic-republican set-up.

During the ascendancy of Banda Singh Bahadur the participation of the Khalsa Panth was ever ensured in the decision-making process. He bowed before the collective will of the Khalsa-Panth while deciding about the offer of negotiated settlement made by Zakaria Khan. The institutions of *gurmatta* and *sarbat Khalsa* are the pillars of

Sikh republican character. As things stand today, Sikhism is perhaps the only religion the world over in which the places of worship (gurdwaras) are governed by a democratically elected body, the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (S. G. P. C.). However, there has been a very vital and potent difference between the modern republicanism and that of the Gurus : whereas the former is quantitative and based on numerical strength, the latter is qualitative and bases on ethico-moral values of religion.

The institutions of *Sarbat Khalsa* and *gurmatta*, which evolved during the turbulent 18th century to determine the community's consensus on matters affecting its solidarity and survival remained operative even during the Sikh rule and are so even today. In the 18th century, the Sikhs used to assemble at the Akal Takht on Vaisakhi and Divali days to take counsel together with a view to deciding the course of action to face or forestall any imminent danger to the community or pursuing a common objective for the welfare of the community. Such a conclave of representative Sikhs held in the presence of the Guru Granth Sahib with a view to deliberating any social, religious or political issue concerning the community has been called the *Sarbat Khalsa*; the final decision that emerged from the deliberations of the *Sarbat Khalsa* is called *gurmatta*. Such a decision represented the collective will of the Khalsa Panth and it carried the sanction of the Guru. Two instances in Sikh history are well known where the collective will of the Khalsa-Panth prevailed vis-a-vis the personal judgement of the Guru. One such occasion was the collective decision of the Khalsa to ask Guru Gobind Singh to evacuate Chamkaur and the other was to check the Guru against bowing to the tomb of a Muslim holy man. Though this was the nascent stage yet such instances provided a solid base to these democratic institutions.

Conquests up to 1767 were made by the *misls* in the name of the Khalsa, but gradually personal ambition and aggrandizement gained the upper hand in consequence of

which the sense of a corporate Sikh commonwealth wore away. During the regime of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the only semblance of a *Sarbat Khalsa* or *gurmatta* took place in 1805 when the Maharaja invited all the Sikh chiefs to discuss the situation arising from the entry of Jaswant Rao Holkar in the Sikh dominions; the fugitive Maratha was chased by the British troops. However, the institutions were resurrected with the rise of the Singh Sabha, a movement aimed at fighting the corrupt practise that had crept in Sikh religion and at resurrecting its pristine glory. The institutions were misused by the political powers during the 1980s, but they have withstood all the efforts of autocratic rulers—may they be the Sikh rulers of the late 18th and early 19th century or the Congress rulers of the 20th century.

Besides, the feelings of altruism and self-respect are the other characteristics of the Sikh ideal social structure. There is in the Sikh tradition an obligation for each member of the Khalsa Brotherhood to set apart one-tenth (*dasvandh*) of his income for ventures of public welfare. The offerings made to the Guru (Guru Granth Sahib, in the present situation) are also one's contribution, however small, to the joint pool meant to be used for public weal. This kind of feeling is useful on more than one count. One, it ennobles one's character as one shares one's labour with others. Second, this also cultivates a sense of detachment for material things and wealth in the mind of the giver. Third, such an act ameliorates the sufferings of many needy persons. The Sikhs daily prayer seeking the welfare of all should also be viewed from this perspective.

The Sikh advice is in favour of the householder life lived in righteousness and humility. However, Sikh Gurus exhort man to live in dignity and let others also live with self-respect. The Sikh advice 'neither to hold others in fear nor to own to anybody's fear'<sup>14</sup> implies opposition to all sorts of oppression and injustice perpetrated by others and at the same time not to oppress or exploit anybody. The former exhorts man to take up the sword when the desire for peace

comes in conflict with the essential human value of self-respect whereas the latter advises us to make love the guiding principle of our life. Indulgence in violence against oppression and in favour of the values of self-respect and freedom is, in effect, an endeavour to establish long-term peace.

Thus, the ideal society of the Gurus' vision, which they tried to build basing it on their metaphysical assumptions, has ethico-moral values serving as its foundation. These values of equality, equity, love, philanthropy, compassion, justice, self-respect, etc. are the necessary corollaries of the metaphysical doctrines. The inhabitants of such a social order are spiritually enlightened beings and their willing cultivation of these moral values is a corollary of their spiritual qualities though both happen simultaneously. The creation by Guru Gobind Singh of the Khalsa-Panth on the Vaisakhi day of A.D. 1699 implied the creation in microscopic form of the ideal society of the Guru's vision. However, it is for these self-realized Khalsa to endeavour for the full fructification of this vision on the global level. The tercentenary of the inception of the Khalsa-Panth in 1999 is a very appropriate occasion for the community if instead of holding huge *melas* we could make a self-introspection so as to assess how farther we have gone on the path shown by the Gurus.

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Unlike in Sikhism and some other religions of the word where all beings are considered in essence His manifestation, God (Brahman) in Hinduism is not the universal Father but is the author of *Varnas*. Different *varnas* were created, as per this hymn, from four different limbs of Brahman. Sudras having born of His feet are considered the lowliest and subservient to the other *varnas*.
2. *Guru Granth Sahib*, V, 374.
3. *Ibid.*, Kabir, 871.
4. *Ibid.*, I, 1330.
5. *Ibid.*, III, 363
6. *Ibid.*, I, 473

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7. Bhai Gurdas, *Varan*, I. 27.
8. Guru Gobind Singh, *Bachitra Natak*, V. 14.
9. The Sikh Scripture when compiled by Guru Arjan in 1604 was named the *Adi Granth*. However, Guru Gobind Singh conferred guruship on it before his demise in 1708. Since then it is known as the *Guru Granth Sahib*.
10. *Harijan*, 10 February 1942.
11. *Young India*, 7 May 1925.
12. *Guru Granth Sahib*, III, 1088.
13. "Rahitnama Hazuri Bhai Chaupa Singh", in Piara Singh Padam, (ed.), *Rahitname*, p. 72.
14. *Guru Granth Sahib*, IX, 1427.

## CREATION OF THE KHALSA : UNIFORMITY OF THE SIKH SOCIETY

SUKHDIAL SINGH

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On 29th March, 1699 the Khalsa was created by Guru Gobind Singh at Anandpur Sahib. It was a turning point in the history of the Sikhs and 'a tremendous change was effected in the whole tone of national character.'

To understand it properly it is imperative to know the administrative systems which were prevalent among the Sikhs before the advent of the Khalsa. The foundation of Sikh society was laid on the Sangats established by Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikh religion.<sup>1</sup> These Sangats were organised, later on, in the Manji system by Guru Amar Das, the third Guru of the Sikhs.<sup>2</sup> During the time of Guru Arjun Dev, the Manji system was replaced by Masand system. It was well organised and well disciplined than the Manji system. The Masands were appointed by the Guru himself. They were the persons of integrity and devotion, Their main work was to preach the religion and to convey the message of the Guru among the Sikh Sangats. They were the incharge of their respective areas. Though the area was not demarcated in technical sense but most probably it was fixed on the basis of the Sikh population. These Masands were regarded by the Sikhs as the representatives of the Guru. Therefore, the Sikh Sangats had great respect for these Masands. Whatever the Sangats wanted to present to the Guru were given to the Masands who further sent those offerings to the Guru. They led the Sangats to the Guru



on the days of bi-annual functions on Baisakhi and Diwali. We have a contemporary evidence to support this view. Zulifkar Ardhistani Maubid, popularly known as Mohisin Fani, writes, "In the month of Baisakh when the sun is in the sign of Taurus, the Masands assemble at the court of the Guru. Whoever from among their *Melis* wishes and is able to undertake the journey, comes to the Guru with the Masands. At the time of taking leave, the Guru bestows a turban on each of these Masands."<sup>3</sup>

Thus, it can be said safely that the Masands were the main link between the Guru and the Sangats. The whole system of Sikh organisation was based on these Masands. "This enabled them to pose as persons of special sanctity and they gradually came to occupy the position of a sort of organised priesthood in Sikhism."<sup>4</sup> It can be judged from the working of Masand system that two main factors developed in the course of time. These were the Guru on the one side and the Masands on the other. The Guru required 'a set of pious and conscientious' Masands and these Masands required 'a strong and unchallenged central authority.'

The Masand system remained intact during the times of Guru Arjun and Guru Hargobind and Guru Har Rai. But after the death of Guru Har Rai, the institution of Guruship had to face some problems created by the claimants of the Guru's family. Guru Hargobind had two grandsons from his eldest son Gurditta, who had died during the life time of Guru Hargobind—Dhir Mal and Har Rai. Har Rai was the younger. Guru Hargobind rejected Dhir Mal and appointed Har Rai as his successor. Dhir Mal revolted against his grandfather's decision but he could not take along the Sikh Sangat. Guru Har Rai had two sons, Ram Rai and Har Krishan. Ram Rai was the elder son. At the time of his death, Guru Har Rai selected Har Krishan as his successor. Ram Rai revolted against this decision and

sought the help of Emperor Aurangzeb. Although Aurangzeb recognised Har Krishan as the legitimate successor but he also supported Ram Rai by giving him a large *jagir* at the present place of Dehradun in Uttar Pradesh. He tried to attract some Masands and the Sangats towards himself. He succeeded to some extent. Thus, the Masand system which was founded by Guru Arjun and worked successfully during the times of Guru Hargobind and Guru Har Rai, was derailed and various discrepancies began to enter into it. These circumstances gave the greedy and opportunistic Masands 'a ready excuse for misappropriating the offerings.' Such kind of Masands began to think themselves as the king-makers. They began to appoint their own representatives called sub-Masands and exhorted maximum facilities from every claimant for the Guruship. During the time of Guru Tegh Bahadur, these Masands became the greatest counterpoise of his authority. Guru Tegh Bahadur had to face many problems and most of these were created by the Masands and the counter claimants. Ultimately he had to sacrifice himself for the sake of religion. The problems created by the Masands in the smooth running of Sikh religion were already in the notice of Guru Gobind Singh. So he abolished it and created the Khalsa. The Khalsa was more of an organisational system than a religious concept. Religious concept was the same which was propounded by the first nine Gurus. Guru Gobind Singh channellised it only in a particular way that is in the Khalsa style. Abolition of Masand system, conversion of the Sangats into Khalsa, appointment of five beloved ones as the presidium of the Khalsa and to make it a sacred institution, to merge his own personality in the Khalsa, to initiate the entrants by giving Amrit, instructions to wear five K's, to add the appellation of 'Singh' and 'Kaur' with the names of every male and female Sikh respectively, and to adopt special words for salutation etc. were the new

features of Guru's Creation. Hence, the Khalsa was an organisational system which brought national uniformity among the Sikhs.

On the first day of Baisakh, Sambat 1756 which corresponds 30th March, 1699, Guru Gobind Singh called a large gathering of the Sikh Sangats at Anandpur Sahib. According to Senapat, a contemporary of Guru Gobind Singh, "When the month of Chet had gone and the first day of Baisakh came, there was a large festival which was over-crowded with the Sikh Sangats. These Sangats came to Anandpur Sahib from every town and were assembled at the bank of river Satluj. Guru Gobind Singh thought that to clear the doubts from the hearts of the Sikhs, the Khalsa must be revealed. When the Sikhs came to know about these ideas of the Guru some of them became the Khalsa immediately but some feared. By revealing the Khalsa and by abolishing the Masands the Guru did the great task.' Sainapat writes further that the Khalsa was baptised with the "Khande-ki-Pahul."<sup>5</sup>

This statement of Sainapat does not throw light on all the aspects of the Khalsa like the year in which the Khalsa was created, the names of the five-beloved-ones, the names of the sacred verses of the Gurus which were prescribed to recite daily, the way of preparing the Amrit etc. According to the Khalsa tradition, the names of the five-beloved-ones are Bhai Daya Singh, Bhai Dharam Singh, Bhai Himmat Singh, Bhai Mohkam Singh and Bhai Sahib Singh. Bhai Daya Singh belonged to the Khatri tribe, Bhai Dharam Singh was a Jat and the rest of three were from the backward classes of the Indian society. The five verses which were prescribed for the Khalsa to recite daily were : the *Japuji Sahib* of Guru Nanak, the *Anand Sahib* of Guru Amar Das, the *Jaap Sahib*, the five *Sawayas* and the *Chaupayee* of Guru Gobind Singh.

To prepare Amrit, Guru Gobind Singh took some pure

water in an iron pot, called *Sarb loh da bata*. The sweet *patashas* or the sugar cubes were added to it. It was stirred with the *khanda* or a double edged sword. While stirring the water with the *khanda*, the Guru recited the verses which have been mentioned above. This is called *Khande ki Pahul* or the Amrit of the Khanda.<sup>6</sup> This Amrit was given to the five-beloved ones to sip one by one from the same vessel. The five palmfuls of the Amrit were given to each one of them to drink. After taking the Amrit each of the five-beloved ones uttered *Waheguru ji ka Khalsa, Waheguru ji ki Fateh*. Some Amrit was sprinkled on them. They were now dressed in blue coloured clothes. According to Bhai Gurdas, the second, "thus the blue dressed young Khalsa was created." (*Iun upje Singh bhujiangie neel amber dhaaraa*).<sup>7</sup> Sarup Das Bhalla says, "The long haired, blue dressed with the appellation of Singh and the high spirited Khalsa was created." (*Sis kesh neel ambri Singh sangya tej nivas*).<sup>8</sup>

They were directed to wear five Ks e.g. K for *kesh* (hair), K for *Kangha* (comb), K for *Kirpan* (sword), K for *Karha* (iron bangle) and K for *Kachhehra* (short breeches). These were made compulsory to wear for every baptised Sikh. The appellation of 'Singh' and 'Kaur' was to be added with the names of every male and female Sikh respectively. The five-beloved-ones were declared as presidium of the Khalsa. They were given the authority to initiate the other Sikhs into the Khalsa. Thus, the ceremony of baptism was completed. At the end a very wonderful thing happened. Guru Gobind Singh stood before these five-beloved-ones with folded hands and requested them to initiate him also in the same way as he had initiated them. The five-beloved-ones obeyed and initiated the Guru. The same Amrit was given to the Guru to drink who also added the appellation of Singh with his own name and became Gobind Singh. Thus, Guru Gobind Singh became the Guru of the Khalsa and also accepted the Khalsa as his Guru.

*Vaho vaho Gobind Singh aape gur chela.*

One aspect regarding the process of the Creation of the Khalsa is very controversial. Some historians say that five goats were killed when the five-beloved-ones were chosen. But the Khalsa tradition and belief is that they were virtually beheaded and the Guru gave them new lives. Both of the views are not historically correct. The contemporary chronicler Sainapat is totally silent on this issue. Killing the goats or to keep the Sikhs in mystery was not the aim of Guru Gobind Singh. Instead, the teachings of the Guru direct the human beings to be truthful and clear in their minds. The five Sikhs offered themselves to sacrifice their heads on the Guru's demand. If the Guru did not behead them, it was his sweet will. But the five-beloved-ones did not shirk from their duty.

Guru Nanak had also induced his followers to be prepared to sacrifice. He had said, "If you are zealous of playing the game of love then tread this path with your head on the palm and once you set your foot this way then find not a way out and lay down your heads." (*Je tao prem Khelan ka chao. Sir dhar tali gali mori aao*). Thus, the requirement of the heads of five-beloved-ones by Guru Gobind Singh is a historical fact and by taking Amrit himself from the five beloved ones the Guru merged his personality into them.<sup>9</sup> The Khalsa was directed to see the image of Guru in Granth.

Though the correct number of the gathering at Anandpur Sahib is not available in any contemporary and near contemporary account yet the later writers have expressed their estimated calculation at about 80,000<sup>10</sup> It is also said that after hearing Guru's declaration about the creation of the Khalsa and his mission of equality and fraternity, most of the Brahmins and Khatris left the gathering.<sup>11</sup> Perhaps, they did not like the mission of the Khalsa.

Ignoring the attitude of these people the Guru is said to have declared, "Let all embrace one creed and obliterate differences of religion. Let the four Hindu castes who have different rules for their guidance, abandon them all, adopt the one form of adoration and become brother. Let no one deem himself superior to another. Let none pay heed to the Ganges and other places of pilgrimage which are spoken of with reverence in the Shastras, or adore incarnations such as Ram, Krishan, Brahma and Durga but believe in Guru Nanak and other Sikh Gurus. Let men of the four castes receive my baptism, eat out of one dish, and feel no disgust or contempt for one another."<sup>12</sup> Though this statement is not an eye witness evidence yet it provides the information of the tradition and opinion prevalent during the later period and among the later writers of the Sikh history. In fact, most of the accounts about the creation of the Khalsa are based upon tradition. The tradition is created by belief. The preparation of the Amrit, the names of the five-beloved-ones, the code of conduct of the Khalsa are all based on tradition or on the accounts of the later writers. Therefore, tradition cannot be discarded. Instead, it should be regarded as a valuable source of information. After all, there is no value of a contemporary written evidence if it goes against the belief of the community. For instance, the Durga worship by Guru Gobind Singh, is recorded in many early writings but it goes against the belief of the Khalsa that is why it has been completely rejected by the historians of the Sikh history. Similarly, the killing of the five goats at the time of selecting the five-beloved-ones are mentioned in many early writings but since it hurts the sentiments of the faithful, this theory also stands discarded. The tradition represents the sentiments of the community. If Bute Shah's statement is based upon tradition, as some historians opine,<sup>13</sup> it represents the Sikh sentiments or the writers' intentions of advocating these sentiments.

Quite similar to the statement of Bute Shah, there is a strong belief among the Sikhs that Guru Gobind Singh directed his followers to denounce the Brahmanical way of living in these words. "As long as the Khalsa keeps intact its distinct entity, I shall bestow full glory on it. But when it goes the way of a Brahman I shall not believe in its actions."

*Jab lag Khalsa rahe niara.*

*Tab lag tej dio mai sara.*

*Jab eh rahen bipran ki reet.*

*Mai na karun in ki partit.*

The code of conduct is also based on historical evidence and tradition. Sainapat tells us about these terms which were made obligatory for the Khalsa. According to Sainapat the Khalsa was directed to discard the five kinds of people in their social set up. These were : the Masands, those who cut their hairs of the head, the smokers, those who do not mix with the Sikh Sangats and those who opposed the Khalsa way of life.<sup>14</sup> Traditionally, the Minas, the followers of Pirthi Chand; the Dhir Malias, the followers of Dhir Mal and the Ram Raias, the followers of Ram Rai were also included in these people. Though these names are not mentioned in any of the contemporary or near contemporary accounts yet there is a very strong tradition among the Sikhs not to socially cooperate with these dissenting groups.

**The Effects of the Creation of the Khalsa :** The creation of the Khalsa was a land mark in the history of the Sikhs. It completed the development of Sikhism and revolutionised the Sikh way of life. Though the creation of the Khalsa was purely an organisational system yet it was done in such a way and Sikh psyche was revolutionized to such an extent that it affected every sphere of Punjabi and Indian society. The event marks a turning point in the history of the Punjab.

1. **It affected the relations between Guru Gobind Singh and the State of Kehlur :** By the creation of Khalsa, the Sikh Sangats were freed from the control of the Masands. These were directly linked with the Guru and there was to be no third agency between the Sangats and the Guru. This affected the Sikh psyche to such an extent that every baptised Khalsa began to think himself independent in every sphere of life. When the Khalsa assembled at Anandpur Sahib in the presence of Guru Gobind Singh it thought itself as an independent community and did not regard any king or ruler as their superior. According to Sainapat, "The Khalsa mounted on the horses fully armed and went to the surrounding villages of Anandpur Sahib. The villagers were directed to adopt the Khalsa mission. Whichever village accepted their directives that was taken into their protection but one who refused to obey the orders of the Khalsa, was plundered. The Khalsa also collected the food and fodder from these villages for its daily requirements. It created much hue and cry. The opponents of the Khalsa approached the Raja of Kehlur and asked for their protection."<sup>15</sup> The supporters of the Khalsa reached Anandpur Sahib and assembled there under the banner of the Khalsa. Thus, the two forces began to muster their power to crush each other. The one was at Anandpur Sahib and the other was at Bilaspur, the headquarter of the Kehlur State. The Raja of Kehlur was seriously concerned with this situation. He saw this as a great challenge to his sovereignty. He demanded from the Guru a certain amount of money as a token of submission. In case of non-payment of that revenue the Guru was to evacuate the city of Anandpur Sahib. The Guru refused to obey these orders.<sup>16</sup> Ultimately, the Raja of Kehlur, with the additional forces of the neighbouring hill states, attacked the city of Anandpur Sahib. These series of battles continued up to the end of 1704. Though the first, second and third



attacks were repulsed by the Khalsa successfully yet the last attack of the combined forces of hill chiefs and the Muslim rulers of Sarhind, Lahore and Jammu could not be faced for long time and in the last week of December 1704, the Guru had to leave the city of Anandpur Sahib. This brought the massive destruction of the city. Thus, the creation of the Khalsa affected the relations between the Guru and the State of Kehlur.

**2. A Democratic system was established among the Sikhs :** Though the supremacy of the Sikh Sangats was recognised in Sikhism right from the beginning yet by the creation of the Khalsa it was established through a proper channel. The five-beloved-ones were to be the presidium in place of one-man leadership of the Khalsa. The Guru made any five baptised Sikhs competent to represent the Khalsa and the Sikhs were directed to believe that wherever five Sikhs would assemble the Guru would also be there. This belief made the five-beloved-ones a sacred institution by which any kind of decision could be taken. The question of the leadership of the community was left to the community itself. After the death of Guru Gobind Singh the temporal form of Guruship was merged with the Khalsa while the spiritual Guruship was merged with *Guru Granth Sahib*. Thus the creation of the Khalsa paved the way for self-determination of the Sikh society. The Khalsa under the leadership of five-beloved-ones and in the presence of *Guru Granth Sahib* was to be fully competent to take any kind of decision. Every member of the Khalsa, assembled had an equal right to express his views. It was a unique kind of democracy.

**3. It roused the dormant energies of the vanquished people :** Cunningham writes that "the last apostle of the Sikhs effectually roused the dormant energies of a vanquished people and filled them with a lofty though fitful longing for social freedom and national ascendancy." This

statement of Cunningham is fully appropriate. After the baptismal ceremony a Sikh adopts a new way of life. Whole of his social, family and religious background stands eclipsed and he becomes a member of the Khalsa Commonwealth which had no caste or colour consideration. An untouchable Shudra person was to be equivalent to a Brahman and Khatri in this commonwealth. This concept of equality and fraternity of Guru Gobind Singh created a stir among the people of higher castes. Some Brahmans and Khatri left the congregation. They did not like the mission of social equality.<sup>17</sup> They were proud of their high social background. But the Guru did not care for them and struck at the very root of the evil by declaring that nobody could call himself a true Sikh until and unless he did not give up the prejudices of caste and regard all his fellow Sikhs as his brothers.<sup>18</sup> Guru Gobind Singh not only gave the down trodden a status of social equality, he also made their physical appearance alike to the nobility of the courtiers. A turban on the head, the vertical moustaches and a flowing beard on the face, a long sword tied to the waist gave a person of Shudra classes a strong boost and raised him equal to the high class warriors of Khatri. "This magic touch of the Guru's wand transformed the members of this despised class into efficient soldiers."<sup>19</sup> Thus, the Khalsa "was a new revolution that provided social equality, moral sanctity and vertical mobility for the lower castes and sections of the society with their self identities."<sup>20</sup> The Amrit of Guru Gobind Singh not only converted their physical appearance but it also brought a revolutionary transformation in its spirit. They probed themselves as the saint-soldiers of the faith ever repeating God's name with their mouths and meditating on war in their hearts.<sup>21</sup> The history of the world does not show another example of such a total change in the social set up. Guru Gobind Singh fought many battles successfully against the forces of

tyranny with a handful of his followers from these lower classes. Thus, the statement of Cunningham mentioned above can easily be extended further and it can be said that Guru not only roused the dormant energies of a vanquished people with a lofty and fitful longing for social freedom but also made himself the master of the imagination of his followers and they came to believe that the Khalsa was under the direct protection of the Lord.

**4. It brought the National Uniformity among the Sikhs :** At the time of the creation of the Khalsa, a particular dress was created for them. Every baptised Sikh was directed to keep the hair of his body unshorn and to wear Kirpan on his person. All had to add the appellation of 'Singh' and 'Kaur' with the names of every male and female respectively. All were directed to recite particular verses in the morning and evening everyday. All were directed to believe in one God and in the teachings of *Guru Granth Sahib*. All were directed to regard Guru Gobind Singh as their spiritual father. Later on, the Khalsa adopted Mata Sahib Kaur as its spiritual mother. All the members of the Khalsa commonwealth were to consider Anandpur Sahib as their birth place. So all the baptised Sikhs are the citizens of Anandpur Sahib. A particular flag of saffron colour was adopted to represent the Khalsa brotherhood. Thus, all these injunctions and 'symbols gave the Khalsa a semblance of uniformity'. This uniformity of dress and discipline brought unity, equality and fraternity in the Khalsa commonwealth. It developed a national consciousness in them. It encouraged them to fight collectively against the tyranny and injustice done by the government forces of the day. Ultimately, it paved the way to establish their own empire in the land of five rivers, e.g. Punjab. Thus, the Khalsa became a symbol of Sikh nationhood. It had its own philosophy (Guru Granth), its own script (Gurmukhi), its own force to protect itself, its feelings to struggle against

the tyranny and injustice and its aspirations to be an independent community. All these things fulfil the condition for a nation and the Khalsa had everything with itself.

**5. It made the development of Sikhism complete :** With the creation of the Khalsa the evolution of Sikhism was made complete. In other words, the Khalsa was the culmination of the Sikh movement. The Sikhism created an ideal person named Gurumukh. Guru Gobind Singh converted this person into a Khalsa. It means the Khalsa is a developed form of the person whom the movement of Sikhism created. Similarly, Guru Nanak established the Sikh Sangats whom the later Gurus organised in Manji and Masand system. Guru Gobind Singh converted these Sikh Sangats into Sarbat Khalsa e.g. the Khalsa congregation. There was a supremacy of the Sikh Sangats right from the days of Guru Nanak. The Sarbat Khalsa was invested with the authority of temporal Guruship. Thus the Sarbat Khalsa was supreme in determining its own course of action. Guru Arjun Dev built the Golden Temple as the supreme spiritual centre for the Sikh community. Guru Hargobind established, besides this, the Akal Takhat as a central place of Sikh temporal power. All these were the different stages of the development of Sikhism. After the death of Guru Gobind Singh, the Khalsa made Akal Takhat a centre of its activities. Thus by the creation of the Khalsa the process of Sikhism was completed. "The creation of the Khalsa by Guru Gobind Singh was not merely an endeavour to integrate the members of his community. It was also a powerful bid to carry the completion of his predecessor's revolution in the fields of social and religious sphere."<sup>22</sup> The seed which blossomed in the form of the Khalsa had been sown by Guru Nanak Dev and irrigated by his successors. The sword which was made compulsory in the Khalsa code of conduct was, undoubtedly conceived by Gobind Singh, but the steel

for this had been provided by Guru Nanak Dev.<sup>23</sup>

**6. New terminology was added in the Punjabi language :** With the creation of the Khalsa a new terminology was invented for the first time in Punjabi language. It added new words and phrases in the day to day conversation. Bole So Nihal, Sat Siri Akal; Waheguru ji ka khalsa Waheguru ji ki Fateh; Singh, Panth, Khalsa, Sarbat Khalsa, Gurmatta, Fateh, Kaur, Panj Piare, Sava lakh for one thing, chardi kala, etc. were the new words and phrases added in the Punjabi language. These made the Punjabi language rich and impressive. These words represent the martial valour of the community. Besides this the Khalsa terminology represents the masculine meanings in contradiction to the Indian traditional feminine meanings of daily conversation. For example, the Khalsa calls his birth place as the father land in place of mother land, for darhi (beard) the Khalsa says *darha sahib*, for *kachch* (short breeches) the Khalsa says *kachchehra*, for turban the word *dastara* or *dastar sahib* is used, *Siri Sahib* for *talwar* (sword), *sava lakh fauj* is used for one man and *daala sahib* for *daal* etc. These words and phrases show the high spirit of the Khalsa.

**A Study of Indubhusan Banerjee's views :** While dealing with the subject of the Khalsa it is imperative to take note of the conclusion reached by Banerjee about the Khalsa. Firstly, he is of the opinion that the entry of the Jats into Sikhism was one of the main causes which compelled Guru Gobind Singh to create the Khalsa. He says that "by the time Guru Gobind Singh ascended the *gaddi* new forces were pressing for recognition. Of these the most important was the traditional character of the overwhelming majority of the jats, whose love of freedom and warlike spirit could no longer be denied a place within the system. In support of his point, he uses a well-known saying "Scratch of the Sikh and you will find the jat."<sup>24</sup>

Secondly, Banerjee is of the opinion that with the creation of the Khalsa, "Militarism was adopted finally as an article of creed." Thus, "a military commonwealth came into existence."<sup>25</sup> Thirdly, he concludes that "the Khalsa was a compound of the Sikh and the jat; the Guru had united the religious fervour of the Sikh with the warlike of the jat."<sup>26</sup> Fourthly, he is of the firm view that with the creation of the Khalsa, Sikhism became more uncompromising, more sectarian in character and the free and untrammelled growth of the Sikhs was arrested.<sup>27</sup>

There is no hesitation to say that all these four conclusions reached by Banerjee are debatable. So far as the first point is concerned it can be said safely that the Khalsa was created as an organisational system in place of Masand system as has been discussed in the beginning of this article. The account of Sainapat, a contemporary chronicler of Guru Gobind Singh clearly confirms this view. Fauja Singh also supports this view when he says, "The creation of the Khalsa was the crowning event of Guru Gobind Singh's life from the stand point of both organisation and ideology. Organizationally, it completely eliminated the need of the order of the masands. The masand system had become corrupt, decrepit and creaky, and needed to be replaced immediately by a better system."<sup>28</sup> It was not created to give certain place to the jats in the Sikh society or under any compulsion of the jat community. The jats were not the dominant factor to press the Guru. If it were true, all the five-beloved-ones must have been the jats or there must have been their majority among these five. But this was not there. Only one of the five-beloved-ones belonged to the jat community who was also not from Punjab. He belonged to the area of Delhi and Saharnpur in U.P. Guru Gobind Singh also nominated a non-jat Banda Singh Bahadur as his temporal successor. Banda Singh Bahadur not only led the Khalsa successfully in the battle-

field but also established the rule of the Khalsa in the very heartland of the jats. The five member advisory council, appointed by the Guru to give advice to Banda Singh Bahadur in every field, also had non-jat members in majority. Bawa Binod Singh, Bawa Kahn Singh and Bhai Baz Singh, the three members of this advisory committee were not jats. Only two of these five were the jats. If the jats were the dominant factor in shaping the policies of Guru Gobind Singh or if a certain place was to be given to the jats in the Sikh society then the jats must have dominated in the leadership of the Khalsa commonwealth. Besides the jats, there were also other communities in Sikhism. Most of these communities belonged to the lower strata of Indian society. After the creation of the Khalsa, they became part of the Khalsa commonwealth which was based upon the concept of equality, liberty and fraternity.

The second point of Banerjee that the militarism was adopted finally as an article of creed and thus a military commonwealth came into existence, is also debatable. The Khalsa was neither an army of Guru Gobind Singh nor it was a military commonwealth. The Kirpan was only one item of the five Ks made compulsory for the Khalsa and it was totally for self-defence and for self-respect. To defend himself and to build a personality of self-respect can not be called militarism or military commonwealth, as Banerjee opines. Instead it should be called a commonwealth of self-determined and self-confident saint-soldiers.

Thirdly, the Khalsa was not a compound of a Sikh and a warlike jat. As has already been said that there were not only the jats in the Khalsa commonwealth but it consisted of other communities also. There were Khatris, confectioners, mazhbis, Ravidasias, water fetchers, tailors, barbers, shopkeepers etc. in the Khalsa brotherhood. Were these people also a compound of a Sikh and a jat? Were the four non-jat members of five-beloved-ones a compound of

a Sikh and a jat? So Banerjee is totally wrong when he says that the Khalsa was a compound of a Sikh and a jat. In fact the Khalsa was a compound of a saint and a soldier. The Sikh was merely a saint before the creation of the Khalsa. When he was converted into the Khalsa, the soldierly qualities were added into the sainthood. Thus, a combination of a saint-soldier came into existence. Fauja Singh rightly says, "Ideologically, the creation of the Khalsa aimed at a well-balanced combination of the ideals of *bhagti* and *shakti*, of moral and spiritual excellence and militant valour or heroism of the highest order."<sup>29</sup>

Fourthly, Sikhism did not become more sectarian and more uncompromising in character after the creation of the Khalsa as Banerjee concludes. In fact, by creating the Khalsa, Guru Gobind Singh infused the national consciousness and national feelings into the Khalsa brotherhood. That is why, the Khalsa waged a war not against any sect or community but against the tyranny and injustice done by the rulers. Guru Gobind Singh wanted his Khalsa to live without accepting any kind of subordination. That is why, the Khalsa came into conflict with the state of Kehlur. The Khalsa protected not only itself but the Hindus and Muslims also. The Khalsa did not fight any communal war but it waged a national war to liberate the country. Ahmad Shah Abdali attacked India, the Khalsa fought with him relentlessly. Ultimately the Khalsa established an independent state in which all the communities shared the power. So, in contradiction to Banerjee's conclusion, Sikhism became more national and more compromising in the national arena of freedom struggle. Its followers were inspired to wage a continuous struggle against tyranny and injustice.

**Meaning of the Khalsa :** There are different views about the meaning of the Khalsa two of which are generally accepted by the historians. The word Khalsa originally



belongs to the Arabic language and it is used frequently in the Persian language. According to the Persian dictionary it denotes the land which was directly cultivated by the Crown without any interference of the Jagirdars or tributaries (*wo zamin-i-Badshhi jo kisi ki jagir na ho*).<sup>30</sup> Cunningham is also of the same view. He writes that "It is commonly used in India to denote the immediate territories of any chief or state as distinguished from the lands of tributaries and feudal followers."<sup>31</sup> Thus, the word Khalsa represented the land which was directly linked with the Crown or Emperor. When this word was applied by Guru Gobind Singh on the social group of the baptised Sikhs it was meant that these Sikhs were directly linked with their Guru and there was no third agency between them. Cunningham also accepts this interpretation and writes, "Khalsa can thus be held either to denote the kingdom of Gobind or that the Sikhs are the chosen people."<sup>32</sup> Sainapat also interprets the word in the same way. He writes, "Then the Sikhs told the ruler that previously those who were the deputies of our Guru they were called the masands. Now these masands are suspended and all of the Sikhs have been made the Khalsa."

*Tab Sikhān yeh baat bataaee*

*Satguru purakh maha sukhdaaee.*

*Agai jin kai naib hote*

*Naav masand sagal the jete.*

*So Satgur kiye dur sab parm jote nij dhaar.*

*Sagal Sikh bhaye Khalsa suniai saach bichhaar.*<sup>33</sup>

These meanings are also confirmed by the *hukamnamas* of Guru Hargobind Sahib and Guru Gobind Singh. "Sangat is the Khalsa of the Guru" or "do not recognise the masands. Whatever you want to offer to the Guru bring it yourself." These directives are frequently given in these *Hukamnamas*.

But there is another view accepted by some writers. According to this view the Khalsa is meant as a person

with a pure heart. These meanings are based on the word which are used by Saint Kabir in the sawayaa of Guru Gobind Singh. Kabir writes : '*Kaho Kabir jan bhaye Khalse prem bhagat jeh jani.*'<sup>34</sup> In these words Kabir says that 'those persons are Khalsa who have love and devotion in their hearts for God.' When we talk about this verse of Kabir one thing should be kept in mind that Kabir had nothing to do with the Khalsa of Guru Gobind Singh. He used this word much before the advent of the Khalsa and much before the origin of Sikhism even. He used this word in the context of the devotion or the stage of mind of a person and not in the context of people's group or a society. So, this verse of Kabir cannot be used to define the character and composition of the Khalsa commonwealth.

Secondly, the word Khalsa is used only once in the sawayaas of Guru Gobind Singh : *Puran jote jagai ghat mai tab Khalsa tahe nakhals janai*. It means that "when the light of the perfect one shines in the heart of the Khalsa only then he is known as a pure person." Here also, these words of Guru Gobind Singh do not define the status and structure of the Khalsa commonwealth. Rather, these words convey the meanings of the state of the mind of the Khalsa persons. Thirdly, there is also a big contradiction about the meaning of the word Khalsa used in the sawayaa and in the Hukamnamas. So, in the light of the discussion, it can be said safely that the Khalsa is a person who is directly linked with the Guru. It also conveys the meanings of an independent status of the Khalsa commonwealth. We have some more evidences to support this view. In *Sarab Loh Granth*, which is a near contemporary account, the Khalsa is said to be revealed in the world by the Divine order of God and the Khalsa is his worldly army (Khalsa Akal purakh ki fauj, pargatio Khalsa parmatam ki mauj). Bhai Gurdas, the second, also confirms this interpretation when he writes that by the Divine order of God the Khalsa was created.

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(*Gurbar Akal ke hukam sion upjio bigiana*). Thus, all these references of contemporary and near contemporary accounts support this view that the Khalsa is an independent person, subordinate only to its Guru, it accepts no third agency, of any kind, as its superior.

It may be concluded that the Khalsa created by Guru Gobind Singh, though apparently seem to have brought complete change in the existing Sikh organisation and life style, but going deep into its working, we find that Guru did not go astray from the path set by his predecessors. Sikhism at that time was passing through two fold danger—from within and without. Guru was not only to face it but also bring an end to it. To meet it, on one hand, he asked his followers to have unflinching faith in the teachings propounded by the Gurus, on the other, he asked them to be prepared to meet the challenges ahead, propounding the theory of 'Bhakti' and 'Shakti'. It was to meet the danger from within that Guru brought an end to the masand system and gave in its place the Khalsa, which was to put the Sikh Organisation on sound footing. Moreover the Khalsa was a democratic system in its own style and working which completely identified with the masses. Five beloved ones were to serve as a presidium to conduct Sikh affairs. All the injunctions enjoined upon the Khalsa like dress and discipline and wearing of 5 K's and using of the appellation of Sikh and Kaur not only brought a sought of uniformity among the Sikhs but also went a long way in establishing unity, equality and fraternity in the Khalsa Commonwealth.

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4. Indu Bhusan Banerjee, *Evolution of The Khalsa*, Vol. II, Calcutta, 1962, p. 109.
5. Kavi Sainapat, *Sri Gur Sobha* (ed. Ganda Singh), Punjabi University, Patiala, 1967, pp. 20, 24.
6. All These references are based only on the Khalsa belief and traditions. There is no reference of these in any contemporary and near contemporary accounts.
7. See the *Vaar* of Bhai Gurdas Second, *Varan Bhai Gurdas ji*, SGPC, Amritsar, 1981, Vaar 41, p. 440.
8. Sarup Das Bhalla, *Mehma Parkash*, Vol. II (Poetry), Language Department, Punjab, Patiala, 1971, p. 825. There is a strong tradition among the nihangs who regard themselves as the original adopters of the Khalsa code of conduct, to wear blue coloured dress.
9. The venture should also be regarded as the submission of Guruship before the Khalsa commonwealth though in theory. See also Teja Singh Ganda Singh, *op. cit.*, pp. 82-83; Banerjee, *Evolution of the Khalsa*, Vol. II, Calcutta, 1962, p. 115; Hari Ram Gupta, *History of the Sikhs* (The Sikh Gurus, 1469-1708), Vol. I, New Delhi, pp. 271-72.
10. See Syad Muhammad Latif, *A History of the Panjab*, New Delhi, 1964, p. 263; Teja Singh Ganda Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 66.
11. Kavi Sainapat, *op. cit.*, p. 33; Koer Singh, *Gurbilas Patshahi 10* (1843 A. D., ed. Shamsher Singh Ashok), Punjabi University, Patiala, 1968, pp. 133-34.
12. This statement is used originally by Bute Shah in his *Twarikh-i-Punjab*. Its Punjabi translation (unpublished) is lying in the library of the Department of Punjab Historical Studies, Punjabi University, Patiala. Then it was used by almost every later historian of Sikh history. Macauliffe translated it into English for the first time, *The Sikh Religion*, Vol. VI, New Delhi, 1963, pp. 93-94.
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14. See Sainapat, *op. cit.*, pp. 22, 28.
15. *Ibid.*, pp. 66-67.
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17. See foot-note No. 3 at page No. 8.
18. G. C. Narang, *Transformation of Sikhism*, New Delhi, 1960, p. 80.
19. Banerjee, *op. cit.*, p. 121.
20. D. K. Verma, *Guru Gobind Singh : On the Canvas of History*, New Delhi, 1995, p. 83.

21. *Mukh mai har chit mai judh bicharai.*
22. See also Fauja Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 36.
23. See also G. C. Narang, *op. cit.*, p. 17.
24. Banerjee, *op. cit.*, p. 124.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 118.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 125.
27. *Ibid.*
28. Fauja Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 31.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 32.
30. *Standard Persian Dictionary*, Allahabad, 1931, p. 250.
31. Cunningham, *op. cit.*, p. 63.
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33. Sainapat, *op. cit.*, p. 45.
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## INSTITUTION OF THE KHALSA— A PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVE

G. S. SANDHU

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An institution may be defined as a configuration or a combination of behaviour patterns shared by the maximum members of a society. Institutions are the basis of the maintenance, regulation and reorganisation of society. Social institutions are society's primary agencies for the realization of values. Institutions also function as guides, directors and containers of individual behaviour. They constitute the cornerstones of a society. Apart from institutions, an individual would be a burden of unexpressed powers and bare possibilities. All the goals, norms and ideals of a society are attained by institutional means. The purpose of this study is to find out why the need of institution of Khalsa felt by the Tenth Master? What values this institution was to achieve and how for it these are achieved?

The social, economic and political conditions of the Indian society of the time of Guru Gobind Singh, particularly the four-folded division of men, the tyrannies of the rulers and the sacrifice of Guru Teg Bahadur are some of the determinants which stirred up Guru Gobind Singh for the Creation of the Khalsa Order. The main purpose of the creation of Khalsa Order was to realize the ideal and just society based upon the values of equality, justice, fraternity and universal brotherhood.

It is profitable to consider and analyse the basic ideas and their implications which underlie the happenings of

Baisakhi of March 30, 1699. Earlier in Indian history, on the same day Gautam the Buddha had received Enlightenment and had heralded the Dawn of a new society and a new world for the "good and benefit of all living things," mortal or immortal. Guru Gobind Singh chose Baisakhi as the day for founding the Order of the Khalsa deliberately, with some such significance in his mind so as to usher in the dawn of the new and regenerated society which was to arise in accordance with the Phoenix Principle, the principle of Ressurrection.

Now the question arises : What were these ideas to which Guru Gobind Singh tried to give concrete expression on this day of Baisakhi? These basis concepts were five in number. (1) The absorption of the individual into the infinite soul, as the ultimate aim and *Summum Bonum* of the human life and as the activity, par excellence, worthy of serious minds; (2) An equalitarian and global fraternity in which this activity must be grounded and in which this ideal must permeate; (3) Acceptance of new principles of politics, subordinated to those of Ethics; (4) Organisation into the Order of the Khalsa; (5) The vision of a new and regenerated humanity.

Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth and the last successor, not only visualized but also established an ideal (Khalsa) society—a society of saint—soldiers, who were inspired by the brightest moral ideals particularly equality and justice. They were always prepared to defend those ideals even at the cost of their lives. The most important factor that played a vital role for the establishment of such a society was the creation of Khalsa. However, the aim of Khalsa was not to conquer a territory and establish a kingdom but to liberate society from the tyranny of the enemies and to defend *Dharma* and the rights of the people.

The greatest task which Guru Gobind Singh set before himself was the reshaping of the Hindu Community. He persistently worked for it till it reached its culmination point

in 1699. On the Baisakhi Day (1699 A.D.), he gave a clarion call to the nation to awake, arise and uphold the cause of national freedom from the grinding yoke of political and social thralldom. Guru Gobind Singh effected one of the most momentous transformation in Sikh Community's growth by The Creation of Khalsa.

The institution of khalsa introduced a spiritual socialism in the domain of the religion. Infact, any institution becomes meaningful only when it helps in achieving a set goal. The Guru had converted the *Sadh-Sangat* into the *Khalsa* of the *Wahi-Guru*, the supreme Lord. Guru gave a supreme position to the Khalsa. In confirmity with the teachings of Guru Nanak, Guru Gobind Singh had argued that authority in every sphere ultimately derives its validity from God and not from any human source. "Like many of the thinkers of medieval Europe, he was of the view that the secular as well as the spiritual power evolve from the same source."<sup>1</sup>

The formation of the Khalsa was not merely the creation of a military machine. Literally Khalsa denotes the "purified". It singifies the organisation of men that have risen above the mire of class-distinctions. The individual thus has to live in vital contact with the whole and fulfil himself for the good of the all (Panth) as Bergson thinks that the value of life lies in its intensity and activity.

Depicting the object of his life in the *Bachitra Natak*, the Guru said :

For this purpose was I born,  
Understand all ye pious people,  
to uphold righteousness, to  
Protect those worthy and virtuous  
To overcome and destroy the evil doers.<sup>2</sup>

Sikh Gurus seek to ensure equality by rejection of caste-system which is the cause of inequalities and injustice. Gurus felt that justice without equality is meaningless. The virtue 'Justice' means respect for the rights of the others and also



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non-exploitation of others. The whole Sikh-ethics is based on three fundamental principles viz; equality of mankind, welfare of all and justice to all.

The tenth Guru subscribes to the writings of Guru Nanak and other Gurus and to all those Bhattas and decries of the caste system and the caste a taboo in the order of the Khalsa created and consolidated by him : "There is no consideration of caste or membership of Varnas."<sup>3</sup> The order of Khalsa is for the purpose of obliterating of caste inequalities.<sup>4</sup>

Guru Gobind Singh preached that the state had no right to interfere with the basic human rights of the individuals. He stood on the strength of his sword and relied on the will of God. He charged the psychology of the people and ordained that mere prayers, humility and submission was outdated and these should be replaced by weapons to ensure the protection of human rights. He exhorted that the sword was God and God was sword. In *Bachitra Natak*, he had at many places given even the status of God to sword. For example he says :

Sword thou art the protector of the saints,  
Thou art the coverage of the wicked;  
Scatter of sinners; I take refuge in these  
Hail to the Creator, savour and sustainer,  
Hail to these, Sword supreme.

At the same time Guru Gobind Singh warned that sword must be used for the furtherance of righteous act and for the suppression of wicked people but if it is used for oppressing the people and for the lust of power, it loses all significance.<sup>5</sup>

Guru Gobind Singh firmly believed in combining spiritual achievement with physical prowess. He was of the opinion that one without the other may lead to sheer hypocrisy or ruthless tyranny.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, the Creation of the Khalsa provided a combination of the ideas of *Bhagti* and *Shakti* or rural and spiritual excellence and the militant valour of the highest order.<sup>7</sup> The Khalsa was a dynamic institution which transformed the outlook of Sikh Social

Organisation. The Khalsa was a "grand creative deed of history which brought a revolutionary change in man's mind and aroused their dormant energies to positive and altruistic purposes.

The creation of Khalsa also became a great political force. The native people who came into the Khalsa brotherhood became proud of their new entrance and heroism. It is time to say that the Guru transfused life into the lamp and languid body of India.<sup>8</sup> The militarism of the *Panth* became a sacred force of protection.

Guru Gobind Singh was a great democratic thinker. He upheld various democratic principles such as equality, sovereignty, fraternity, justice and human rights. Some tenets of democracy advocated by Guru Gobind Singh can be found in the order of Khalsa. His idea of *sangat* has a democratic view. His aim was to have both spiritual and material advancement of society. But ethical and spiritual consideration are more important than materialistic enrichment. Woodrow Wilson rightly said, "Our Civilization cannot survive materially unless it be redeemed spiritually. Albert Schawitzer says that the goal of a society and of the world is ethical and the world's failure stems from its lack of optimistic hope. Guru Gobind Singh laid emphasis upon *jnam* and *shakti* in order to use power for righteous purposes.<sup>9</sup>

We find close relationship between force and justice in the philosophy of Guru Gobind Singh. Justice without force is powerless. Force without justice is tyranny, hence justly condemned. Radhakrishnan agreed that force derives ethical sanction when it is to be used to restore justice. In *Zafaranamah*, Guru Gobind Singh boldly asserts his mission of Tegh (force) in the following words :

When all the peaceful means to uphold righteousness fail, then it is right and lawful to take sword in hand.<sup>9</sup>

Guru Gobind Singh gave the message of liberty, equality and freternity of mankind. He abolished privilege of caste,

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birth, station, creed and raised the lowest equal in all respects to the brightest. He not only taught but also practised equality. At the time of creation of the Khalsa, the Guru first baptised the five beloved, then he himself took baptism from them. This is rare example in the history of mankind where a Guru and disciple treat themselves at par.

The Khalsa brotherhood was instituted to annul caste distinctions and to infuse a spirit of equality, freedom and sacrifice among the people. The Khalsa brotherhood is a fraternity of equal members. The Khalsa was ever to maintain the highest standard of conduct and morality. The social order was rejuvenated by ridding it of all kinds of inequalities. This led to a unique elevation of human spirit and character and to unfolding of man's potentialities. The Khalsa fellowship was a microcosm of an universal human brotherhood.

Equality and Justice are pre-requisites of any ideal society. We find only the social and political dimensions of equality and justice in Marxist philosophy but the social and political dimensions of equality and justice are deeply rooted in Sikh metaphysics and Sikh Social and moral justice is fused together in the social philosophy of Guru Gobind Singh.

It was a passionate conviction of Guru Gobind Singh that unless the principle of 'Open Democracy' is accepted and implemented in both the spheres i.e. the sphere of relations between the rulers and the ruled and in the sphere of relations between the states on the international level, the emergence of a *Universal Culture*, as the basis of global fraternity is not possible. Human mind has been recently awakened to the urgency of this truth, and this means a tribute to the prescience and genius of Guru Gobind Singh.

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## GURU GOBIND SINGH'S RELATIONS WITH AURANGZEB

HARPREET KAUR

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The martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur had a deep effect on the young Guru Gobind Singh but he was helpless to register his protest in any manner. He only chose to remain in the Shivalik hills and with the passage of time to equip himself with means to resist the persecutions from the government. In the words of J. D. Cunningham, "Gobind ever dwelt upon the fate of his father and the oppressive bigotry of Aurangzeb; study and reflection had enlarged his mind, experience of the world had matured his judgement, and, under the mixed impulse of avenging his own and his country's wrongs, he resolved upon awakening his followers to a new life and upon giving precision and aim to the broad and general institutions of Nanak. In the heart of powerful empire he set himself to the task of subverting it, and from the midst of social degradation and religious corruption, he called up simplicity of manners, singleness of purpose, and enthusiasm of desire."<sup>1</sup>

The Guru was confronted with many serious problems, standing in the way of the fulfilment of his programmes. Firstly, he considered it necessary to arm the whole community for self-defence or self-preservation and not with a view to achieving any political objectives as some people believe. All such preparations would not go unnoticed by the Mughal government.

Secondly, India at that time was under very strong government and Aurangzeb's religious policy was

unconductive to the development of Sikhism. The Punjab, being the gateway of India for the Muslim invaders from the north-west, was largely inhabited by the fanatic Muslims, who had settled here. They would not tolerate Sikhism growing. Thirdly, as the Guru later wrote in the *Zafarnama*, he was not the supporter of idol-worshipping and the hill chiefs were mostly the worshippers of the idols.<sup>2</sup> So the Guru was surrounded by the hill chiefs who were hostile to his faith. Fourthly, even his own relatives like the Dhir Mallias and the Ram Raias were strongly inimical to him and they, again and again, lodged complaints with the Mughal government for their claims to the Guruship. There were the Guru's own relatives who had been encouraging Aurangzeb against the Guru and his followers. Fifthly, the followers of the Guru comprised the low caste, down-trodden and poor people. The rich and the affluent people could not afford to displease the government by expressing their allegiance to the Guru. The poor people were not in a position to help the Guru financially or materially to carry out his programmes. He had little resources in men, money and material.<sup>3</sup>

Under these circumstances Guru Gobind Singh found himself confronted with an odd situation. In the words of G. C. Narang, "Although the masses of the Hindus were bitterly against the galling yoke of tyranny, the so-called natural leaders of the people were most officiously loyal to the throne and most bitterly hostile to all progressive movements, because they feared the loss of court favour and ultimately the loss of land and power which their neutrality as well as supposed complicity was sure to bring in its wake."<sup>4</sup>

So the Indian conscience, under the centuries-old slavery had been deadened. They had lost their old self-respect and self-confidence. The masands who had been the promoters of Sikhism had fallen from their former sense of devotion to Sikhism and had, to some extent, become dishonest and corrupt. The Guru was shortly to disown them. Despite all

these handicaps the Guru felt that the way out of his difficulties lay through the difficulties themselves and there was to be no escape from them. "Dissensions within and dangers from without threatened Sikhism alike and it seemed that the infant community had reached a pass from which there was no deliverance."<sup>5</sup> The same author further writes, "Sikhism was thus threatened with extinction, root and branch, and though it has been said that the Sikhs would have been left alone if they reverted to their earlier path and relapsed into a purely religious community of quietists, it is clear that the past history of Sikhism and the character of its votaries made that impossible and there remained no other method of self-defence except the aid of arms."<sup>6</sup>

Let it be emphatically asserted that the Guru had no political aims or designs against the Mughal government. The Guru knew his limitations and he could not plan an all out war against the Mughals. In his own humble way he planned to prepare himself and his followers against the ruthless suppression and religious presecution at the hands of the Mughals. The Guru only wanted to adopt a defensive policy and he never thought of adopting any offensive postures. Even the preparation by the Sikhs in self-defence was too much for the state to tolerate.

Though an uneven path lay before Guru Gobind Singh yet the following<sup>7</sup> circumstances seem to be in his favour. Firstly, hundreds and thousands of people were at the beck and call of the Guru knowing full well of the hazards involved in siding with him against the Mughals.

Secondly, the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb was engrossed in the far off Deccan battles. Though the Emperor issued orders to the governor of Sirhind from time to time he could not personally come to the Punjab and deploy the imperial forces against the Guru.

Thirdly, many Muslims who considered Guru Gobind Singh to be fighting for the cause of truth and justice supported him. It is said that the king of Iran and the Caliph of Mecca had shown disagreement with the religious policy

of Aurangzeb. The Khalifa of Baghdad had even refused to see the envoy of Aurangzeb.

Fourthly, the Guru had inherited strong traditions of Sikhism. The foundation of Sikh community had already been laid and Guru Gobind Singh had to build on the same strong foundation. In the words of Gokal Chand Narang, "Gobind himself, in fact, as well as his work, was the natural product of the process of evolution that had been going on ever since the inception of Sikh brotherhood. The seed which blossomed in the time of Guru Gobind Singh had been sown by Nanak and watered by his successors. The sword which carved the Khalsa's way to glory was, undoubtedly, forged by Gobind, but the steel had been provided by Nanak."<sup>8</sup>

With these circumstances before him the Guru launched upon his career, no doubt, beset with grave possibilities. Since he had established his headquarter at Anandpur, in the Shivalik hills, the various hill chiefs living in the adjoining areas got apprehensive of the Guru's presence amidst them.<sup>9</sup> They provoked the Mughal government again and again to take action against the Guru and every time the Mughal campaign was led against the Guru the hill chiefs, invariably, sided with the Mughals, as would be evident from the following military campaigns of the Mughals led against the Guru. The Guru's role was always defensive. He never led any expeditions against the Mughals.

#### **The Expedition of the Khanzada 1694**

According to M.A. Macauliffe, when Aurangzeb was busy in the Deccan one Dilawar Khan, availing himself of the disturbed conditions in the Punjab, built up his political power and got jealous of the Guru's reputation. He sent a contingent of one thousand men under his son Rustam Khan to realise revenue from the Guru and in the event of the Guru's refusal he was ordered to plunder Anandpur.<sup>10</sup> Giani Gian Singh<sup>11</sup> and Khazan Singh<sup>12</sup> consider Dilawar Khan to be the governor of Lahore. According to Gokal Chand Narang, Dilawar Khan was the governor of Kangra.<sup>13</sup>



According to Bhai Sukha Singh, Dilawar Khan was a Muslim chief.<sup>14</sup> *Vachitra Natak* is silent about Dilawar Khan's status. It seems that Dilawar Khan was one of the Mughal officers sent from Delhi to take action against Guru Gobind Singh and some recalcitrant hill chiefs. He had been sent after the failure of Mian Khan and Alif Khan in the battle of Nadaun. Guru Gobind Singh writes in his *Vachitra Natak* that Dilawar Khan sent his son against him. At the dead of wintry night they attacked Anandpur. The Guru's men immediately got alert and firing started from both sides. The invading forces ran away without achieving anything and it was a shameful retreat on the part of the invading Pathans.<sup>15</sup> As the Guru further wrote many of the invaders lost their lives in the cold water of river Satluj. Since then the Sikhs began to call that river *himayati nala* (a helping rivulet).

#### **Husain Khan's Expedition (1695)**

Dilawar Khan was very much disappointed on Rustam Khan's unsuccessful expedition against the Guru. According to Guru Gobind Singh himself Husain Khan assured Dilawar Khan of teaching a lesson to the Guru and started for Anandpur at the head of two thousand soldiers. On the way Husain Khan plundered many villages in the Shivalik hills. The Guru whole-heartedly condemned Husain Khan for plundering the poor population of the hills. In order to secure the help of some of the hill chiefs against the Sikhs, Husain Khan committed atrocities on them. Husain Khan demanded ten thousand rupees from Raja Gopal of Guler. On the latter's inability to pay Husain Khan attacked Guler.<sup>16</sup> According to Gian Singh, Gopal of Guler sought Guru Gobind Singh's help. The Guru sent a contingent of 300 horsemen to help Gopal under the command of Lal Chand, Ganga Ram and Bhai Sangtia.<sup>17</sup> According to *Vachitra Natak* Kirpal Katoch, Bhim Chand of Kehlur and many other hill chiefs fought on the side of Husain Khan. On the other side Gopal of Guler and the Sikhs under the command of Sangtia fought against the invaders. Kirpal Katoch and Husain Khan were killed in the battle.<sup>18</sup> Guru Gobind Singh wrote in his

***Vachitra Natak :***

Gopal was victorious and the battle came to an end. Every body then went home and the rain of bullets that was originally intended for me was showered by the Almighty elsewhere.<sup>19</sup>

**Shahzada Muazzam's Expedition (1696)**

The news of the repeated failures against the Sikhs particularly at Anandpur reached Aurangzeb in the Deccan. This news angered the Emperor who sent one of his sons, prince Muazzam, afterwards known as Bahadur Shah, to manage the affairs of the Punjab which were in disorder. The prince himself took his position at Lahore and sent Mirza Begh with a force to chastise the Guru, his followers and the hill Rajas. The Rajas were severely punished but the Guru was left alone through the intercession of a Sikh, Bhai Nand Lal, who was a secretary to the prince.<sup>20</sup>

In the words of Gokal Chand Narang, "The Guru thus escaped without any harm but the Rajas were taught a severe lesson by Mirza Beg, the imperial general. The Guru, thanks to the diplomacy of Nand Lal, had got some recess during which he recouped his power and strengthened his resources."<sup>21</sup>

The Guru was given some respite to think and to mature his future plans.

**Creation of the Khalsa (1699)**

On the Baisakhi day, March 30, 1699 the Guru called a big meeting at Anandpur. First he administered baptism to his five tried Sikhs and then the Guru begged them to baptise him in the same way as he had baptised them. About eighty thousand men were baptised in a few days.<sup>22</sup> He duly armed them with swords to be permanently kept on their persons. They were to have a common surname 'Singh' or lion. Bravery, peace and purity was to be their religion. He inspired them with a high sense of bravery. 'I shall send a sparrow,' said the Guru, and lo! the imperial hawk shall fall before it.' Guru Gobind Singh through his baptism poured his life into his Sikhs and invested them with his own

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personality.<sup>23</sup> His masterly stroke of 1699, creating the brave Khalsa, released an unbounded fund of human energy, which signified a far greater achievement than any military victory he won or might have won. "It must not be forgotten that in the latter instance, a nation was up in arms against its enemies and it is the collective efforts of the masses rather than individual achievements that ultimately made the revolution a success."<sup>24</sup>

The military strategy of Guru Gobind Singh was, like that of his grandfather, basically of a defensive character. He had no political ambitions of any kind, although some writers like Cunningham have mistakenly attributed such motives to him. What he aimed at, all along, was to build up a strong movement of armed resistance which might accept the Mughal rule all right, but not the tyranny and oppression associated with it. Further, he was no match for the vast resources of the empire and that offensive would prove fatal to his ultimate purpose. Therefore, his constant endeavour was not to take the initiative and to avoid clash of arms as far as possible. His entire career illustrates this.<sup>25</sup>

The Guru always knew the strategic importance of being near the base. His military base was Anandpur, whereas his political base was made of Malwa, Majha and Doaba tracts of the Punjab,<sup>26</sup> where lived the majority of the Sikhs. He always saw to it that uninterrupted communication should continue to exist between the two bases. After leaving Anandpur, his march towards Malwa was a highly strategic move. The Sikhs came to be regarded as models of physical beauty and stateliness of manner. A tremendous change was effected in the whole tone of national character. Even those people who had been considered as dregs of humanity were changed as if by magic, into something rich and strange. The sweepers, barbers and confectioners, who had never so much as touched the sword and whose whole generations had lived as grovelling slaves of the so called higher classes, became, under the stimulating leadership of Guru Gobind Singh, doughty warriors who never shrank from fear and

who were ready to rush into the jaws of death at the bidding of their Guru.<sup>27</sup>

The aim of Guru Gobind Singh in founding the Khalsa was to build up a nation of the purified ones who would be free from the evils of prevalent religions and society. But the rulers of the time thought that he was organising a force to attack and destroy them.<sup>28</sup>

### **Battles of Anandpur (1701-05)**

The creation of the Khalsa came to the hill chiefs as a bolt from the blue. The growing military strength of the Guru and the increasing number of his followers unnecessarily unnerved the hill chiefs. Bhim Chand of Kehlur, Bir Singh of Jaswal and Madanpal of Sirmur met in a conference and sent an envoy to the Emperor's viceroy in Delhi requesting him for help, against the Guru. Their request was forwarded to the Emperor in the Deccan. The Emperor replied that the imperial army could be sent to their help if they were prepared to meet their expenses. The Rajas willingly agreed to do so and the two imperial *panjhazari* Sardars Painda Khan and Dina Khan were sent with their troops to join the three Rajas in their march on Anandpur. The two opposing armies met. Painda Khan is said to have challenged the Guru in a duel but was killed and Dina Khan who continued fighting for some time was wounded and he finally fled away from the field.<sup>29</sup>

The hill chiefs, enraged at the victory of the Guru, planned another attack upon him. Almost all the chiefs of the Shivalik hills including those of Mandi, Kulu, Nurpur, Jammu, Kangra and Garhwal participated in the attack. They besieged Anandpur but they could not make any headway. In the battle of Nirmoh also the hill chiefs were beaten back.

The hill chiefs made another appeal to Wazir Khan, the governor of Sirhind, for help. After hearing the defeat of imperial army in the first battle of Anandpur Aurangzeb himself is said to have sent an order to Wazir Khan to proceed against the Guru.<sup>30</sup> The Mughals in collaboration with the hill chiefs marched against Anandpur. They attacked the

Guru from one side and the hill chiefs from another. After initial fighting the Guru finding himself badly outnumbered decided to retire to Basoli from whose Raja the Guru had already received an invitation.<sup>31</sup> The enemies pursued the Guru who gave them another battle in which the combined forces of the Mughals and hill chiefs were decisively rolled back. The Guru stayed at Basoli for some time where the Raja of Kehlur led another attack against the Guru and the same was also repulsed,<sup>32</sup> without much difficulty. The hill chiefs having been fully demoralised approached the Guru for peace and friendship. The Guru who was too anxious to live in peace accepted the offer and thus for some time the hostilities were called off.

The peace between the Guru and the hill chiefs could not continue for long. Once as the Guru lay encamped near Chamkaur two imperial officers going from Lahore to Delhi along with their contingents were requested by the Raja of Kehlur to attack the Guru promising to pay them large sums of money. Though small in numbers the Sikhs gave a resolute fight to the imperial army. When the fight was at its thickest an amazing thing occurred. Sayyid Beg, one of the imperial officers who had already heard much about the Guru, was very much impressed by seeing the Guru in the battle-field. With many of his soldiers, he joined the Guru. Alif Khan, the other officer left the battle-field and beat a hasty retreat.<sup>33</sup> The hill chiefs again and again troubled the Guru at Anandpur. But they could not make any headway into his headquarters.

Hearing the news of the repeated failures of the hill chiefs and the Mughal officers Aurangzeb who was in Deccan deputed Saida Khan with a large army to bring the Guru to submission. It was the harvest time when Saida Khan marched on Anandpur. The Guru had already dispersed the Sikhs except about 500 who were confronting the heavy odds of the invader. The Guru ordered the evacuation of Anandpur. As the Sikhs left the town the Mughals entered and plundered it badly.<sup>34</sup> When the Mughal army was on its

return march towards Sirhind the Sikhs attacked them from the rear and recovered most of the booty which they had plundered from Anandpur. Some writers have omitted the three actions given above all together. The writers may differ as to their details it would be wrong to assert that all these skirmishes are mere fabrications of the later period.

The Emperor was now further enraged and alarmed. He was informed by Bhim Chand of Kehlur of the rising power of the Guru. The Emperor sent an express order to Wazir Khan of Sirhind and Zabardast Khan of Lahore to proceed with a large army against the Guru. The hill chiefs joined their forces with those of the Mughals and a formidable army marched against the Guru to have another trial of strength with him. The town of Anandpur was surrounded from all sides. The siege continued for many months. But the besieging forces could not enter the town. Since all passages to the town had been blocked by the besiegers and in the absence of any supplies to the town the Sikhs occasionally led desultory sallies to seize the supplies from the enemy. But the enemies tightened their hold so much that the life inside the fort became utterly difficult.<sup>35</sup> The Sikhs were left with nothing to eat. Just at this time the Guru received an envoy from the hill chiefs promising a safe conduct for him and his followers if they vacated Anandpur peacefully. The officers of the Mughal forces tried to convince the Guru on oath of Quran that in the case of evacuation of Anandpur the Guru would not be harmed in any way.<sup>36</sup> In fact, the Guru had no faith on their promises.<sup>37</sup> Being under great pressure from the inmates he decided to leave Anandpur.

The oaths taken by the Muslim officers were violated by them as the Guru referred to it in his *Zafarnama*,<sup>38</sup> the letter written to Aurangzeb. In the confusion that ensued after their leaving Anandpur especially when the Guru and his people reached the flooded Sirsa the Guru's mother along with his two younger sons, Zorawar Singh aged 9 and Fateh Singh aged 7, went in different directions. One of the Guru's

family servants who accompanied them handed them over to the men of Wazir Khan, the governor of Sirhind, who bricked them alive and then beheaded them despite the advice of the Nawab of Malerkotla to the contrary.<sup>39</sup> The Guru's mother died of grief at the sad demise of her grandsons.<sup>40</sup>

On the other side some of the Sikhs drowned in Sirsa while attempting to cross it. Guru's two wives, Mata Sundari and Mata Sahib Kaur, accompanied by Bhai Mani Singh, went to Delhi.

#### **Battle of Chamkaur (1705)**

Guru's elder sons, Ajit Singh aged 18 and Jujhar Singh aged 14, accompanied the Guru to Chamkaur where the Guru took his position in a mud fortress. According to Senapat the owner of the *haveli* handed it over to the Guru of his own sweet will. But according to Sukha Singh,<sup>41</sup> Bhai Santokh Singh<sup>42</sup> and Macauliffe<sup>43</sup> the Sikhs forcibly took possession of that *haveli* and made the owner a captive. According to Malcolm<sup>44</sup> Chamkaur was the headquarter of a ruler who had gladly handed over the fort to the Guru. Senapat believes that it belonged to a (Jat) *zamindar* who handed it over to the Guru.<sup>45</sup> In fact, in Chamkaur, there was neither a fort nor a headquarter of a ruler. When the Guru had been hotly pursued by the Mughals the village of Chamkaur was the only nearest place available to him from where the Guru could give a battle to the pursuing forces. It was indeed a very unequal combat. Commenting on the tactics of Guru Gobind Singh, Banerjee writes, "The defence that he extemporised at Chamkaur, where, as tradition affirms, the Guru with only 40 chosen companions, kept at bay for several hours a whole host of the opposing troops has hardly a parallel, and the keen and discerning eye with which he (later) chose the spot where the battle of Khidrana was fought and the army of Wazir Khan was compelled to retire, leaves us in no doubt as to his tactical genius."<sup>46</sup> The Guru had at his command two scores of half-starved and ill-equipped companions. The mud fortress was besieged by

thousands and thousands of Mughal soldiers. It was December 22, 1705 and in the day long skirmishes, excepting a few, say about five or six persons including the Guru, all others along with the two elder sons of the Guru perished in the fighting against the enemies. At night the living companions of the Guru 'ordered' him to leave the *haveli*<sup>47</sup> in the friendly cover of darkness. In the hope that if the Guru could manage to escape the holocaust he could organise the Khalsa again and if he stayed on in the *haveli* for the night he was sure to meet his end next morning.

The Guru bowed before the decision of the *panchayat* and accompanied by three Sikhs, Bhai Daya Singh, Bhai Dharam Singh and Bhai Man Singh, strayed away from Chamkaur and reached the outskirts of Machhiwara,<sup>48</sup> after hazarding unbearable hardships which he faced during his nocturnal journey through the inhospitable jungle. In the wilds of Machhiwara he had to move about barefooted and for days he had nothing to eat but tender leaves of *akk* plants. He was found lying thus, with torn clothes and blistered feet by Nabi Khan and Gani Khan.<sup>49</sup> They knew that the imperial army was in pursuit and the Guru would not be spared. They chose to risk their lives for him. They dressed him in the blue garb of a Mohammadan *faqir* and took him in a litter on their shoulders. They informed the inquirers that they were carrying *Ucch ka pir*.<sup>50</sup> On the way they were intercepted by a pursuing party whose commander closely interrogated the escort about the identity of the *pir*. He remained unsatisfied with their answers and the commander called Qazi Pir Mohammad of Saloh, once the Persian tutor of the Guru,<sup>51</sup> and asked him to identify the occupant of the litter. The Qazi gave helpful reply by certifying him to be a Muslim saint<sup>52</sup> and saved the situation. The Guru is said to have given them presents and a certificate, stating the circumstances of their help and recommending them to the consideration of the Sikhs.

The Guru moved on to Jatpura, where he was befriended by another Mohammadan, Rai Kalha, who offered his



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services to him unreservedly. The Guru asked him to send some body to Sirhind to bring information about the fate of his younger sons. The messenger sent by Rai Kalha brought the sad news that the children had been done to death.<sup>53</sup> The news of the death of his sons deeply grieved the Guru.

The Guru took leave of his host, Rai Kalha, and moved forward. It was rumoured that the forces of Sirhind were pursuing the Guru. In the present district of Faridkot, the Guru once again collected his men and fought against the pursuers in 1706. The battle was fought at Muktsar, then known as *Khidrana ki dhab*. The Guru found that those men of Majha who had deserted him at Anandpur came and laid down their lives for the cause of the Guru at Muktsar.<sup>54</sup> When the Guru came to know of this he was deeply moved and he tore up the disclaimer which the Guru carried with him all this time. The Mughal forces returned without achieving anything.

The Guru reached Talwandi Sabo now called Damdama Sahib where he stayed for nine months with an influential Sikh named Dalla.<sup>55</sup> He made this place a great seat of learning and described it as the Guru's Kashi. We certainly notice a change in the policy of the Mughal government towards the Guru, at this stage, otherwise how could he be allowed to remain in peace at Damdama Sahib for all these months. Some sort of correspondence was going on between the Guru and the Mughal Emperor Aurnagzeb which had resulted in the suspension of Mughal hostilities against the Guru.

#### **Zafarnama—An Epistle of Victory**

On his way towards Khidrana, when at Dina Guru Gobind Singh sent a letter in Persian verse in reply to the summons from Aurangzeb. The original letter of invitation is not traceable in any of the Mughal records nor do we have any details of its contents. The twenty eighth Sakhi of the Sakhi Book (*Sau Sakhi*) contained a brief summary of it. According to it the *parwanas* were issued to the Guru saying, "There is only one kingdom. Seeing this (*parwana*), you better

immediately come here. Our religious sentiments are the same (with the common belief in the unity of God), if not, I will come myself. The awe and superiority of saintliness will then have gone. You may live in the kingdom as other saints and devotees live." To this, continues the *Sakhi*, were added some words of arrogance usual with the style of royal *parwana* that the kingdom had been bestowed upon him by God.

The Guru had not a very happy experience of the Emperor and his officers' previous messages and promises. He could not, therefore, readily agree to go to the Deccan to see the Emperor at Ahmednagar. He preferred, in the first instance, to write a detailed reply to the royal message informing the Emperor of the misbehaviour of his *qazis*, *bakhshis* and *diwans* who had flouted the oaths on the holy Quran and had gone back upon their pledged words. This letter, well-known as *Zafarnama* is preserved in the collection of his compositions, the *Dasam Granth*.

The Guru called this letter *Zafarnama* or an epistle of victory. It is a very significant letter throwing ample light on Guru Gobind Singh's attitude towards Mughal Emperor and his government. The Guru sent this letter to Aurangzeb in the Deccan through his trusted Sikhs, Bhai Daya Singh and Bhai Dharam Singh. The letter was delivered to the Emperor at Ahmadnagar. "Some Mahammadan authors (absurdly) assert" says Irvine on the authority of Warid, "that Guru Gobind Singh sent petitions to Alamgir offering to make submission with a promise to accept Islam."<sup>56</sup> *The Ahkam-i-Alamgir* of Inayatullah also refers to a representation made by the Guru for an interview with the Emperor but makes no mention of the promise to accept Islam.<sup>57</sup>

But this opinion clearly stands refuted in view of the contents of the letter. The letter was worded in a harsh, defiant and strong language.

*Zafarnama* is a letter comprising 111 verses in Persian language. The first twelve verses are in the adoration of God and in the next few verses the Guru mentions that the

*Bakhshis* and *Diwans* of the Emperor were all liars and were not true to the oaths taken on the holy Quran.<sup>58</sup> Next, the Guru mentions as to how his forty half-starved men were helplessly faced with the innumerable hordes of the Mughals at Chamkaur.<sup>59</sup> The Guru further wrote about his coming forward with his arrows and guns to fight against the promise-breaking Mughals.<sup>60</sup> According to him when there was no way out it was lawful to hold a naked sword in one's hand as a last resort.<sup>61</sup> A little further the Guru wrote in a little strong language telling the Emperor that neither he was the worshipper of his religion nor familiar with its tenets. Neither he recognized the merciful Lord, nor he had any faith in the sayings of the holy prophet.<sup>62</sup> The Guru further wrote that he had received the Emperor's letter and his verbal message through his officials and it behoved him to rise equal to his words.<sup>63</sup> The letter further advised the Emperor "Do not wantonly spill the blood of any one, for your own blood as surely will be spilt by death."<sup>64</sup> The Guru further wrote that it mattered least if his four sons had been killed. The venomous snake (the Khalsa) was still alive<sup>65</sup> and continuing the Guru said, "I do not consider you capable of recognising God as you have been guilty of committing acts of inflicting injury to the hearts of the people."<sup>66</sup>

On the whole, through this letter the Guru told the Emperor that he possessed a limited power and supreme authority lay in the hands of God. The Guru accused the Emperor and his officials of backing out from their promises. They did not act in the true spirit of religion and in the name of religion they had betrayed the people. The Guru told the Emperor that because of his tyranny and high-handedness he was a misled Muslim. The Guru was strongly critical of the behaviour of the Emperor and his officials. One can so easily know from the contents of this letter whether it was petition made to the Emperor or a report about the misdeeds of the Emperor and his government.

Some writers have misinterpreted the contents of this letter. Mohammad Latif writes that towards the close of the

reign of Aurangzeb, the Guru lived in peace at Anandpur. But the king, who was then in the Deccan, always felt anxious about him. He, therefore, issued a mandate summoning the Guru to his presence. When the messenger reached Guru Gobind Singh and delivered the royal *farman* to him, he kissed it and placed it on his head in token of respect. He treated the messenger with the greatest honour, and told him that he regarded himself as a dependent and a vassal of the king of kings and that to obey His Majesty's command would be an honour to him, but that, before accompanying the messenger, he would like to submit his grievances to the Emperor in writing.<sup>67</sup> The misunderstandings of Latif are so obvious from the above remarks. During the last days of Aurangzeb, neither the Guru was at Anandpur, nor living in peace. The forces of Wazir Khan were pursuing him hotly, Far from conceding to the command of Aurangzeb the Guru told him that if he was anxious to meet him he could come to the Punjab in the Kangar area inhabited by the Brars. There would be no risk to Emperor's person.<sup>68</sup>

In fact it seems that Aurangzeb, who was 90 years old and was almost ready for the grave, made a request to the Guru to meet him in the Deccan as the Emperor was physically so weak that he could not come to the northern India. The Emperor wanted to express his regrets to the Guru personally for all the misdeeds and atrocities that he perpetrated on the Sikhs during his life time. The mental position of the Emperor in his last days clearly reflected in the letter that he wrote to his son Azam. The letter reads :

Old age has come and weakness has grown. Strength has left my body. I came to this world alone and am going alone. Now I do not know as to who I am and what I have been doing. The days passed without meditation, have left nothing but remorse for me. I did not at all give good government to my people, nor I endeared my subject to me... I did not bring anything with me to this world but I am carrying a load of sins on my shoulders. I do not know as to what retribution I shall have to suffer. Although I have high hopes on the

grace and kindness of God, still, in view of my misdeeds, fear is gripping me tightly.<sup>69</sup>

A similar letter was written to his son Kambakhsh. According to Mohammad Latif, when the Emperor received Guru Gobind Singh's letter he was pleased with its contents. He also felt delighted to see the dress and appearance of the Bhai who had brought it. He bestowed dress of honour on the agent and dismissed him with a letter and valuable presents for the Guru. In this letter the Guru was again desired to report to the Emperor's presence in which case he would be received kindly. The Guru accordingly set out to visit Aurangzeb but on his way he heard of the death of the aged monarch.<sup>70</sup>

By reading the contents of the *Zafarnama* the immediate reaction on the Emperor could not be but of anger. But the thorough perusal of the letter made the Emperor realise of his high-handedness and cruelties inflicted on the Guru's family and his followers. With this consciousness mingled with helplessness caused by old age the Emperor became more realistic and he ardently desired to see the Guru. It is quite clear that the Guru was convinced of Aurangzeb's sincere desire to meet him in the Deccan, otherwise Guru Gobind Singh could not risk his life. But some writers wrongly believe that the Guru, not knowing about the success or failure of Daya Singh's mission who had carried *Zafarnama* to Aurangzeb in the Deccan, thought it best to go to the Deccan himself and settle the affairs with the Emperor there.<sup>71</sup>

Passing through the Marwar the Guru had not gone far from Bagaur, the headquarter of a *pargana* in the erstwhile Udaipur state, when Bhai Daya Singh, on his way back, met the Guru and related to him his experiences in the Deccan.<sup>72</sup> It was about here that the Guru also heard the news of the death of Aurangzeb which took place at Ahmedabad on February 20, 1707.<sup>73</sup> The news of Aurangzeb's death put a stop to the Guru's march to the south. He had then nothing else to do that side. He, therefore, decided to return to the

Punjab via Shahjahanbad (Delhi). This was about the middle of March 1707.<sup>74</sup>

It is quite clear from the above that there was a change in Aurangzeb's policy towards Guru Gobind Singh during his last days. The forces of Sirhind which followed the Guru to Khidrana di Dhab (Muktsar) killed most of the followers of the Guru who had taken shelter there. From there the Guru came to Talwandi Sabo and stayed there for many months without being harassed by the Mughal forces. The Guru once again started living in peace restoring many social and religious activities to a full bloom. We notice that the Guru also changed his attitude towards the Mughal Emperor in view of the latter's apologetic and a remorseful bent of mind. The Guru was not irreconcilable and invertebrate enemy of the Mughal Emperor or the Mohammadans as Muhammad Latif believes.<sup>75</sup> He was only hostile to the intolerant policy of the Mughal government against the non-Muslims. When he found that the Emperor had realised his follies, the Guru suspended his hostilities against the government and cordial relations between the Guru and Aurangzeb's successor continued till the Guru breathed his last in 1708.

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## GURU GOBIND SINGH—THE LAST PHASE

KIRPAL SINGH

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The last phase of Guru Gobind Singh's life can be divided into three parts :

1. Writing of Zafarnamah to Aurangzeb; the Mughal Emperor;
2. Guru Gobind Singh's relations with Bahadur Shah;
3. Guru Gobind Singh's martyrdom.

After the battles of Chamkaur, (in the Ropar District) Khidrana (in the Muktsar district) and his stay at Damdama Sahib ( in the Bhatinda district), Guru Gobind Singh visited the place which now goes by the name of Dyal Pura (near Dina). In those days this territory belonged to Kangarh, a small Estate which has been mentioned by the Guru himself in his Zafarnamah :

"You are invited to visit village Kangarh and mutual talk would take place there."

The place where the Guru wrote this letter, a Gurdwara has been erected called ZafarNamah Sahib. It is very interesting and instructive to know that the Guru named this letter as "epistle of victory". Indeed it indicated victory of virtue over the forces of evil. In the worldly sense, the Guru was defeated but his spirit and the spirit of his Khalsa were never lowered. It was on this account that the Guru named this letter as epistle of victory. Guru appears to have written this letter in reply to the Emperor's letter. G. C. Narang writes that Guru Gobind Singh "received a letter from Aurangzeb requiring his

presence at Delhi. He replied in long epistle couched in spirited, Persian verse<sup>1</sup> stating all the wrong that had been done to him and justifying his recourse to sword as ultimate remedy. It seems that Aurangzeb in his letter to the Guru had sworn by the sword to treat him honourably but the Guru tells him plainly in his reply that he does not care a rap for the wily Mughal's oaths. In the *Zafarnamah* the Guru complains of wantonly broken pledges and arouses Aurangzeb's sense of justice and religious integrity. "What could semi-starved forty person do when they were attacked by thousands of well equipped soldiers." He admonishes Aurangzeb that a religious man should recognise God in every body but at the same time the guru warned : "If you look at your military prowess and riches, God would be my shelter". Bhai Daya Singh was deputed to deliver *Zafarnamah* to Aurangzeb. He found some difficulties in contacting the Emperor. So a *Hukam Namah* was issued by the Guru to the local *Sangat* to help Bhai Daya Singh.

What was the exact effect of *Zafarnamah*, it cannot be assessed. Some writers are of the view that after reading it the Emperor sent two mace bearers to invite the Guru to the Deccan. J. D. Cunningham writes "messengers arrived to summon him to the Emperor's presence". Soon after we find that the Guru set out for the Deccan. He took his southern journey through Rajputana and had reached a place named Baghour when he heard the news of Aurangzeb's death in 1707. Immediately the Guru retraced his steps towards Delhi.

**Guru Gobind Singh's Relations with Bahadur Shah :** Prince Mauzam, to whom the title of Shah Alam was granted by his father Aurangzeb, ascended the throne with the name of Bahadur Shah. In the war of succession which followed the death of Aurangzeb Prince Mauzam was successful. His relations with the Guru can be divided into two phases :

- (i) As a Prince
- (ii) As an Emperor

According to Bhai Sukha Singh author of *Gurbilas Padshahi Das*, Prince Mauzam was brought near Guru Gobind Singh by his well known court poet Bhai Nand Lal who was very close to the Prince. The Prince was appointed Governor of Multan in 1696 and subsequently appointed governor of Kabul and Lahore in 1698. When he heard that there were disturbances in the Punjab Hill states, he led a punitive expedition. While mentioning this incident in *Bachitra Natak*, The Guru says, "Both Guru Nanak and Babar's family have been set up by God. The former should be regarded as Kings of religion and the latter as Kings of the world. The descendants of Baber exact money forcibly from those who do not pay Guru Nanak's dues. They punish them severely and then completely loot their villages. "These words acknowledging the worldly supremacy of Babar's descendants and the fact that the Prince did not molest the Guru but on the other hand looted and punished those who had deserted the Guru, seems to suggest that some sort of understanding was arrived at between the Prince and the Guru. This policy was quite consistent with the career of Prince Mauzam. Sir J. N. Sarkar has stated "Aurangzeb's constant fear was lest his son should send aid to Qutab Shah and enable him to escape from the beleaguered fort" King Abdul Hassan of God Kanda sent his agent secretly to the Prince with costly presents requesting him to intervene and save him from imperial wrath.

Since no Mughal Prince was sure about the succession and sword was the only arbitrator, all the princes tried their best to consolidate their individual influences. As Koer Singh the author of *Gurbilas* has clearly pointed out Prince Mauzam's understanding with the Guru was a subtle move to counteract Prince Azam's power in the Deccan.

Later on when Aurangzeb died Prince Mauzam

marched towards Agra and according to Irvine "Guru Gobind Singh met Bahadur Shah at some point when the Prince was on his march down country from Lahore to Agra to contest the throne with his brother Azam Shah". Again Bhai Nand lal persuaded the Prince to seek the blessings of the guru in the war of succession.

According to Khafi Khan Guru Gobind Singh at that time had "two or three hundred horsemen and lancers and some footmen". The Guru sent some of the Sikhs to fight for the Prince in the battle of Jajo. Ultimately the Prince was victorious and ascended the throne.

Both Persian and Gurmukhi sources corroborate the fact that the Prince after his victory gave costly gifts to the Guru. The Prince met the Guru at the Agra fort and presented him a "jewelled scarf". This fact is supported by Senapat, Khafi Khan and other writers.

Some writers however, entirely misunderstood the relations of Guru Gobind Singh with Bahadur Shah when they stated that the Guru joined service of the Mughal Emperor. Perhaps they have taken the cue from Khafi Khan. Khafi Khan writes that the Guru accompanied the Emperor to the Deccan. This does not mean that the Guru joined his service. The exact word used by Khafi Khan is *Rafaqat* which according to Persian English Dictionary means "fellow traveller" or 'being companion'. The way the Guru was moving toward the Deccan makes this point very clear. The author of *Tarikh-i-Bhadur Shahi* writes "At the time the army was marching southwards towards Burhanpur, Guru Gobind, one of the grandsons of Nanak, had come into those districts to travel and accompanied the royal camp. He was in habit of constantly addressing assemblies of worldly persons religious fanatics and all sorts of people".

**Martyrdom of Guru Gobind Singh :** Guru Gobind Singh's martyrdom has been narrated by different writers in a different way but the earliest accounts of Guru's martyrdom makes it clear that the Guru was attached by

an unknown Pathan, Senapat in *Sri Gur Soba* states, "One Pathan came near the Guru and talked to him sweetly for two or three hours to get his chance but he could not get it because of the numerous persons. He went to his home and again came after two or three days and kept waiting for three or four hours and again he went away without getting the chance.

"Similarly he came for so many times but without success. Now he studied the situation and selected the evening time for his objective. One evening he called upon the Guru who called him in and gave him *parsad* (food which had been blessed) which that unholy person put in his mouth. There was no Sikh nearby at that time except one who was dozing and the Guru himself was lying down to rest. The sinner attacked, the Guru flashed his sword and with one stroke killed him and did not allow him to go out".

The author of *Tarikh-i-Bahadur Shah* states : One day an Afghan who frequently attended these meetings was listening to him when certain expression, unfit for the ears of the faithful, fell from the tongue of the Guru. The Afghan was enraged and regardless of the Guru's dignity and importance gave him two or three stabs with a knife and killed him". Khafi Khan particularly noted that the murderer could not be traced. He states : During those days when Bahadur Shah had set out on his march toward Deccan a person named Gobind one of the leaders of that notorious sect, came to his presence and accompanied him with two or three hundred horsemen, lancers and footmen. Two or three months later he died accidentally from a wound of dagger and the murderer remained unknown".

It may be noted that it was Wazir Khan who compelled Guru Gobind Singh to leave Anandpur. Again it was he who besieged the Guru at Chamkaur and ultimately forced him to leave. Guru Gobind Singh's two younger sons were killed by the orders of Wazir Khan.

But the situation changed dramatically after the death of Aurangzeb. Bahadur Shah, son of Aurangzeb won his war of succession in the battle of Jaju with the help of the Guru and held the Guru in high esteem. Consequently Bahadur Shah honoured the Guru by presenting him scarf worth Rs. 60,000 (Senapat's Guru Soba-Guru's *hukamnamah* to the *Sangat* of Dhaul). Wazir Khan saw his own ruin in this new development. Thus circumstantial evidence goes to prove that either Wazir Khan appears to have had a hand in the martyrdom of the Guru or Bahadur Shah, the Emperor himself had sent the Pathan to put an end to the life of the Guru as we find a news letter indicating that Bahadur Shah honoured Jamshed Khan's son, who was the killer of Guru Gobind Singh. (vide *Akhburat-i-Darbar-i-Muala*, Jaipur)

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1. Usually official Correspondence was done in prose in specific form as we find in the contents or any records.

## HUMANISM OF GURU GOBIND SINGH

SUDARSHAN SINGH

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A supreme genius and master mind, a most dynamic and electrifying personality, Guru Gobind Singh appeared on the Indian scene when the society presented a very dark and gloomy picture. He infused a new spirit of optimism in the minds of the sharply divided, oppressed and demoralized people, who were groaning under the yoke of the caste system and the tyrannical rule of the Mughals. He raised protest against tyranny, injustice and religious intolerance and devised means to resist these evils. He taught them the fatherhood of man and instilled in them courage, self-confidence, fearlessness and strong determination to resist evil and fight back oppression and tyranny.

Guru Gobind Singh succeeded at a very young age as the tenth and the last Sikh Guru, after the martyrdom of his father Guru Tegh Bahadur. He settled at Anandpur and started preaching the mission of Guru Nanak and also encouraged his followers to take part in sports and martial exercises. He got prepared a big war-drum and named it as Ranjit Nagara. People from all parts of the country flocked around him and made offerings of weapons and horses. Competitions in horse-racing, musket-shooting and archery became a common feature of the life at Anandpur. The Guru shifted to Paonta and gave full attention towards literary activities as well as increasing his military strength. He made a deep study of the old Puranic literature written in Sanskrit and started

translating it into Hindi and Punjabi. Besides Punjabi, he gained proficiency in Sanskrit, Braj and Persian. The Guru was a great Scholar and a born poet. He composed poetry, singing the praises of the Lord and also wrote warlike poetry to arouse the dormant energies of his countrymen to fight out evil and tyranny. The Var '*Sri Bhagauti Ji Ki*' popularly known as '*Chandi-di-Var*' was written by him in Punjabi language to infuse marital spirit among his followers. The '*Jap Sahib*' '*The Bachitra Natak*', the Akal-Ustat and '*Chandi-Charitra*' are some of the well known compositions of the Guru.

The spade work for the spiritual growth and bringing social equality in the class and caste ridden society had already been done by the preceding Gurus. But empty rituals and supersition still persisted and were deliberately imposed by the priestly classes. After the martyrdom of Guru Arjan, Guru Hargobind wore two swords of '*Miri-Piri*'. and encouraged training in sports and use of arms among his followers. He took up arms and fought six battles against the Mughal-forces. After him, all the Gurus carried arms and were attended by armed body guards. Guru Gobind Singh created the Khalsa Brotherhood in 1699 A. D. and brought this gradual transformation to its completion. He baptised the '*Panj payaras*' with *Khande ki Pauhal*' or 'baptism of the Sword' and asked them to take four principal vows—the vows of Kulnash; Kritnash, Dharamnash and Karamnash. He emancipated their mind from the bondage of dogma and superstition, strongly spoke against the multiplicity of gods and holy places and took drastic measures to cut at the root of the caste distinctions in the society. He gave his followers a distinct outward appearance and knighted them as '*Singhs*' or lions. He taught them to lead a life of fearlessness, self-respect and devotion. He invested them with the sword to combat all sorts of tyranny and oppression. The Guru later on, himself received baptism from the '*Five Beloved Ones*' which he had earlier baptised and equated himself with



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the Khalsa. He declared that the Khalsa was the Guru Khalsa. Never before in history had a religious leader—a master so completely identified himself with his disciples as the Guru did. The creation of Khalsa had a miraculous effect on the psychology and character of the people. Those people who were considered as dregs of humanity and had not even touched a sword were changed into doughty warriors under the stimulating leadership of Guru Gobind Singh. The creation of Khalsa gave the severest blow to the caste-system and instilled courage into the minds of disheartened people. A new people were born, committed to the great ideal—'all men are one'. The Khalsa, which he created, thus became a spearhead of resistance to all evil.

Guru Gobind Singh respected every religion. He was neither against the Mughals nor ever used a word of hatred against Islam. He fought only for a just cause and against those who indulged in social, religious and political persecution. His militarism had a distinct individuality as he fought for the protection of the poor, Dharma and motherland. The sword was to be used only for self defence as a last resort as mentioned in the '*Zafarnamah*' which he wrote to Aurangzeb, 'when all other, means have failed, it is but lawful to take to Sword'. Many Muslim generals like Saed Khan, *Mimu* Khan, Pir Buddhu Shah, his sons and followers fought on the side of the Guru in the battles which he fought against the Mughals. His life was saved by his Muslim admirers like Nabi Khan and Ghani Khan. Bhai Kanhaiya, the Sikh water carrier was produced before the Guru to explain his conduct for serving water to the Mughal soldiers in the battlefield of Anandpur. Bhai Kanhaiya replied 'I have been giving water to everybody who needed it on the battle field. But I saw no Mughals or Sikhs there. I saw the Guru's face in every one'. The Guru was pleased with his reply and told the Sikhs that Bhai Kanhaiya had understood his mission correctly. He blessed Bhai

Kanhaiya and gave him ointment to be applied on the wounds of the injured soldiers on the battle field.

Guru Gobind Singh was a great messenger of love, equality and universal brotherhood. He laid great stress on the unity of God and equality of man. He considered that there was one Lord pervading all over the universe and the whole human race was also one. His views regarding the brotherhood of man, existence of the same spirit every where and inner unity of life in various religions are clearly depicted in the following selected verses of *Jap Sahib* and *Akal-Ustat*.

He has no name, no dwelling place, no caste,  
 He has no shape, or colour, or outer limits.  
 He is the primal being, Gracious and Benign,  
 Unborn, ever Perfect, and Eternal.  
 He is of no nation, and wears no distinguishing garb;  
 He has no outer likeness; He is free from desire  
 To the east or to the West,  
 Look where you may,  
 He pervades and Prevails  
 As love and Affection.'

*Jap*, 80.

There are many Sects like Jogis, Sanyasis, Jatis, Brahamcharis, Hindus, Muslims, Saints and humans, but all human beings are the same. There is no sustainer other than the God Almighty. Everyone is His image and He is the Lord of the Universe.

*Akal-Ustat*, Guru 10, p. 85.

The Hindu temple and the Mosque are the same. 'Pooja and Namaz' are the same. All men are the same but they look different. The distinctions among the gods, the demons The Yakshas, the Gandharvas are all due to their residence in different regions. They have the same eyes, the same ears, the same body and the same build, all are composed of earth, air, fire and water. Allah and Alakh are the same. The *Puranas* and the *Quranas* are the same. Men are all one. They have got the same form and the same constitution."

*Akal-Ustat*, Guru 10, p. 86.

"As millions of sparks emanate from the bonfire and

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 again merge with it; as millions of Particles emanate from the dust and again merge with it; as countless waves found in the water sheet remain one with the water sheet, Similarly from the same divine light millions of creatures come out and eventually merge with it. The whole universe and all its creation is thus reflection of the supreme light."

*Akal-Ustat*, Guru 10, p. 87.

Guru Gobind Singh will live ever in history as a great humanist and a nation builder. He evolved a classless well-knit brotherhood of Saint Soldiers and aroused in them a strong spirit of patriotism and nationalism. He sacrificed everything, his home, his father, his family and children for his ideals, so that his countrymen could live a life of honour and self-respect. There is no parallel of such a supreme sacrifice in the pages of history. He laid great stress on the unity and equality all human beings and preached universalism as the essential of the religion. His inspiring message of love, equality and universal brotherhood has a great significance and relevance for the people all over the world.

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## GURU GOBIND SINGH IN INDIAN ART

R. P. SRIVASTAVA

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There is the past tradition in Indian history to picturise the saints, sages and gods and goddesses either in the form of wall paintings or in the forms of sculptures. Ajanta,<sup>1</sup> Ellora and Elephanta are concrete examples where the life and teachings of Lord Budha have been either painted or executed in stone. Such instances can be traced way back in hoary past until today. Right from Indus Valley civilization passing through Taxila,<sup>2</sup> (Pakistan), Bamiyan (Afghanistan) entering into the Central Asian<sup>3</sup> plains, one finds hundreds of evidences of religious visualisation of Lord Budha and Lord Mahavir in South India. E. Dale Saunders of France has traced first sculpted figure of Lord Budha in second century A.D. Buddhism started in India but spread all over South East Asia and China, Japan and Far East as also in Central Asia. It is only in the middle of seventh century that Islam had inroad in Central Asia and Kashmir. Kalhana's '*Rajtrangni*' provides us wealth of information regarding social, cultural and historical account of kings of Kashmir. Also the first Holi Shankaracharya of Kerala found the sculpture of Lord Vishnu in Badrinath in Himalayas in the middle of seventh century A.D. It is this Shankaracharya who travelled throughout India and established four *Maths* at Jagannath Puri, Dwarika, Joshimath and Shingeri. Likewise the case of Guru Gobind Singh is not very different from those quoted above. Tenth Master

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Guru Gobind Singh was born in Patna on December 26, 1666 A. D. and passed away on October 7, 1708 A. D. in Nanded (in Maharashtra). Ganda Singh has described Guru Gobind Singh in the following terms :

Guru Gobind, the tenth and the last of Gurus, has been rightly called the soldier-saint of India. In his youth he applied himself closely to self-education and was deeply impressed by the idea that God has been sending saviours from time to time to uphold righteousness and destroy evil. He felt that he himself had this mission to perform in his own country which suffered under the yoke of religious and political tyranny. The teachings of his predecessors and unique examples of martyrdom had elevated the spirits of the Sikhs.<sup>4</sup>

Hence, encouraged and impressed by the new faith and religious spirit, artists also expressed their innermost urge to visualise the achievements of life of Guru Gobind Singh in more than one style and medium.

First of all, as far as this writer has studied, Pahari painters succeeded in painting the well chiselled personality of tenth Guru Gobind Singh and other nine Gurus. Complete set of these paintings were published by late W. G. Archer when he was Curator of Victoria and Albert Museum, London (UK) after his retirement from Indian Civil Service in 1948.<sup>5</sup> It would be worth-while to mention here that similar sets of paintings of Sikh Gurus are available in Sheesh-Mahal Art Gallery and Museum, Patiala, for scholarly pursuits of art lovers.

Since Patiala has been a centre of Phulkian Renaissance during reign of Maharaja Narendra Singh (1845-1862), resultantly large number of Pahari painters migrated to Patiala Durbar and wielded their brush and colours in painting the religious miniatures of Hindu Pantheon including those of Sikh Gurus. Luckily, very few people are aware of it that very fascinating portraits of Sikh Gurus were painted in the Masnad Chamber of Qila

Androon of Patiala.<sup>6</sup> There are the rare masterpieces of Patiala paintings. There is no match of such paintings in the whole of North-west India. Since these paintings were executed during the reign of Maharaja Narendra Singh, and then royal family shifted to Sheesh Mahal (at the rear of Old Moti bagh Palace, Patiala), these chambers were left at the mercy of utter neglect and decay. Since, scientific method of research of building material are not applied for the preservation, and, also, continuous closure of chambers, lead to dampness and humidity. Hence, this national treasure of paintings of Gurus must be preserved at all costs by the Government as well as by private organisations.<sup>7</sup>

Quite recently Dr (Miss) Deborah A. Swallow of Victoria and Albert Museum, London (UK), visited Qila Mubarak, Patiala, in the month of May-June 1998 in order to select the relics and other material relating to tenth Master Guru Gobind Singh to celebrate the tri-centenary celebration-cum-exhibition Khalsa in London, which shall travel in India and abroad.<sup>8</sup> Then, a team of photographers from Delhi visited Patiala on 24, 6. 1998 and photographed the following material on behalf of Victoria and Albert Museum, London (UK), (H1) *Hukamnama*<sup>9</sup> of tenth Guru Gobind Singh issued to the ancestors of Patiala ruling dynasty Bhai Rama and Bhai Taloka in eighteenth century. It is dated 2nd August 1696 A. D. Bhai Rama and Taloka helped the great Guru with cavalry etc. while fighting the Mughal forces. Then, at this juncture he (the Guru) expressed his gratefulness to both the brothers in these words at Anandput Sahib :

*"Tera Ghar Mera Assay."*

Ever since Patiala ruling family has been held in high esteem by Sikhs as well as Hindus both.

The relics belonging to Guru Gobind Singh photographed on 24.6.1998 were : (1) Spear, (2) Dagger preserved in Darbar Hall of Qila Mubarak,

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Patiala, (3) Hukamnama as referred to above, (4) comb with hair.

Apart from the above it would be interesting to mention here a very important painting of ten Sikh Gurus in one panel by the Pahari painter Gyathoo Ram in nineteenth century. This is only rare painting on one panel carrying the portraits of all ten Gurus. This was found in the personal collection of late S. Tarlok Singh 'Chitrakar' artist of language Department, Government of Punjab, then located in Qila Bubarak, Patiala.<sup>10</sup>

Then, there was a prominent artist of Amritsar named late S. Dalip Singh who was professor of Fine Arts first in Ludhiana, then in Khalsa College of Education for Women, Amritsar. He painted a monumental oil painting in oil, the size of which was 8'×10'. It was such a magnificent painting of tenth Guru that no body has made such a realistic and robust portrait in modern times. Late Dalip Singh was a good friend of this author. He shared many beneficial ideas about painting the life cycle of Gurus. But Providence wished otherwise. However, the society and government should commemorate his rich work in befitting manner. This painting now enshrine the wall of Central Sikh Museum, Golden Temple, Amritsar.<sup>11</sup> Among the Sikh artists who specialized in painting the life cycles from Sikh histories was Sobha Singh, who has left an indelible mark on the history of Indian painting. After starting as an artist in Indian Railways, he switched over to the painting of Sikh Gurus specially the tenth Master. According to the present assessment, no Indian artist has so successfully painted the portraits of Guru Gobind Singh as late Sobha Singh. Before the end of life, he settled down at Baijnath Paprola in Himachal Pradesh, in order to continue his mission of paintings of Sikh Gurus in perennial peace and tranquility in the lap of Dhauladhar mountains. Of course, he was much influenced by the oil technique of William Turner and Thomas Gainsborough of

England. Sobha Singh's life time achievement was finally accorded a prestigious recognition by awarding him a D. Litt. Degree (Honoris Causa) by Punjabi University, Patiala. Some of his masterpieces are still in the collection of Punjabi University, Patiala, and other private collections. Dr. Karan Singh of Jammu and Kashmir possesses his unrivalled "*Sohni-Mahiwal*" in original. A scion of Jammu dynasty, he is a learned personality manifesting various aspects of Indian culture, religion and history.

In order to commemorate the life, teachings and sacrifices of Guru Gobind Singh in terms of paintings, on the lines of medieval Europe, Indian artists, specially from Punjab concentrated on discovering the important events of Sikh history depicting various aspects of life of Guru Gobind Singh. It has generally been seen that most of the artists who worked on the different aspects of Guru Gobind Singh's life executed paintings in the oil medium just like Sobha Singh. They are G. S. Sohan Singh, Kirpal Singh, Devender Singh, Narendra Singh and Prem Singh. Sohan Singh and G. S. Sohan Singh worked in Amritsar (Brahmbuta Skhara Market). Late Hari Singh also painted several portraits of Guru Gobind Singh in Khoti Hatta in Hall Gate, Amritsar. Other artists who deserve affectionate comments are Kirpal Singh and Devendra Singh. They have painted forceful large panels of Guru Gobind Singh which enshrine the Committee room of Punjabi Univeristy, Patiala, as also its museum. No one can remain unaffected without being influenced by the feeling and ideas with which they have been painted. Substantial amount of inspiration has been exerted in discovering the essence of history, and, then to convey its message to the spectators. The main crux of the visual representation is whether it succeeds in invoking the message for which it is painted. If it does, it is the masterpiece. If it fails to convey the desired message, it does not deserve our



sympathy. Hence, it is mentioned for all intents and purposes that paintings done by these artists have, by and large, succeeded in their aim. Consequently, all visual expression of human feeling is born out of religious norms (either for worshipping purposes or for depicting the force of tyranny by the contemporary rulers) to evoke the sympathy and emotion of masses. The more graphic description of historical events in terms of painting, poetry, fiction or history, the more romantic and forceful purpose it serves. Human history provides many such examples from the trends and tradition of Kaleidoscopic fabric of India and abroad. Much of history is buried in the minds of men, in the mounds and ruins waiting to be excavated by serious scholars of this land. Hence, in this context artists for our purpose is the social historian of the time in which he is living. He expresses his feelings in a faithful and through proper perspective, whatever he has read and heard from religious books and chronicles of the times—present as well as past.

From paintings and portraits of Guru Gobind Singh, the present day artists of Delhi have brought excellent calendars and diaries duly sponsored by Bank of Punjab and Punjab and Sind Bank. Every office in Punjab display these calendars. Every Sikh home in Punjab displays the beautiful paintings of Guru Gobind Singh and worship these with utmost reverence and respect like Hindus. Artist K. C. Aryan (who originally belongs to Lahore now in Pakistan) now settled in Delhi has published a thought provoking and informative book on the artists of Punjab which deserves every art lover's attention.<sup>12</sup> Then very distinguished woman, artist-cum-scholar Sucharita Sharma of Jalandhar has done a most outstanding research covering the works of artists of Punjab after the partition of India in 1947. This work is worth any connoisseur's study.<sup>13</sup>

Not contented only with the above cited, the scholarly

community would be delighted to know that Guru Gobind Singh was painted in the form of wall paintings. One such magnificent example was discovered by Kanwarjit Singh Kang in Faridkot (Punjab). It would be worthwhile to mention here that he surveyed the wall paintings of Punjab and Haryana to complete his doctoral dissertation in Punjab University, Chandigarh.<sup>14</sup> He also held an exhibition of drawings and sketches of Sikh Gurus made by late Nirmal Singh. Shri Ravi Inder Singh, the then speaker of Punjab Vidhan Sabha, persuaded S. Parkash Singh Badal in 1978 to take great personal interest in preservation of this cultural heritage of Sikhs which was on the way to destruction and ultimate extinction.<sup>15</sup> S. Parkash Singh Badal is again Chief Minister of Punjab. We have every expectations from him so far as the preservation of cultural heritage of Sikhs is concerned.

Since this study concentrates only on the picturisation of Guru Gobind Singh one more example may be cited here from the times of Maharaja Bhupinder Singh. As Patiala was a great centre of art and culture since the times of Maharaja Karam Singh, hence, many distinguished families of artists migrated from Delhi to Patiala after the downfall of Mughal empire. One such family was of Basharat-Ullah and Alla Ditta whose grand son Haji Mohd Sharif lived and worked in Gher Sodhian, Patiala. Haji Mohd Sharif painted portraits both : historical and religious. He was alive until the time of partition of India in 1947, after which he migrated to Lahore. He headed the Department of Mughal miniature painting in Mayo College of Art, Lahore. He passed away in 1978. Haji Mohd Sharief painted a wonderful painting of Guru Gobind Singh riding his favourite horse. It was a majestic painting indeed never seen anywhere in India<sup>16</sup> and abroad.

This writer has received an information regarding the availability of portraits of Guru Gobind Singh in

These days many paintings and photographs depicting the Gurudwara Sahib constructed at the site of Hemkunt Sahib in Chamoli District of Utrakhand of U. P. Hemunt Sahib lies on the right side of the road leading to Badrinath. It can be reached by driving any type of conveyance from Hardwar and Rishikesh via Rudra Prayag and Dev Prayag and stopping at Gobind Ghat, a convenient halting station on the road leading to Badrinath shrine (of Lord Vishnu). Gobind Ghat remains behind about 10 km from Badrinath. People from all walks of life especially the Sikh devotees from all parts of India reach there, cross the river down in the valley and climb up a steep ascent for the reverent shrine of Hemkunt Sahib. The story of Hemkunt Sahib runs thus. Tenth Guru Gobind Singh saw in his dream that he went there, at the place now called Hemkunt Sahib in his previous life for offering the penances. When the people read this account in his autobiography, they began hectic efforts to search this place. According to the researches of Raja Mrigendra Singh (uncle of Maharaja Amarinder Singh), this place was traced out by the wishes of Maharaja Narender Singh of Patiala, who sent his court Purohit Tara Singh Narottam along with ten devotees to find the place as dreamed by the tenth Guru and noted in autobiography. The place, as the Providence wished was found out ultimately in 1883 A. D. Now thousands of pilgrims visit this place throughout the year by cars, taxis, buses, cycles, scooter as well as on foot bearing all sorts of hazards in the valley. They pay their obessience and have their dip in Holy tank situated near the Gurudwara, and return blessed visiting Hardwar on their way back to homes.<sup>17</sup> There are a large number of paintings of Guru Gobind Singh in private collections who wish to remain anonymous for the reasons best known to them. Also there is some remote possibility of his paintings having gone abroad. This will

require sustained efforts to trace them out either by the government or by some private enterprise in order to complete the process of compilation of pictures of Tenth Master.

As it is matter of faith which inspires the followers of any religion because they have indelible mark of the picture in their soul, hence, it must be satisfied. From the very dawn of human history, it is the psychological image (i. e. picture or scripture) of any spiritual leader on the surface of this earth, that people become attached to this personality or that with blind faith notwithstanding the consequences they face in the teeth of opposition from the non-believers. Every one who is associated with the march of history as also the events of historical phenomenon which occurred then, is aware, that in the end, a supreme personality whose paintings are painted today, sacrificed his family, i. e. four sons, and finally his personal self in Nanded (now in Maharashtra)

When the news of sacrifice of his four sons reached him, he simply remarked :

What if four be dead...  
thousands more live !<sup>18</sup>

It has been said by some one that man may come and man may go but I go for ever.

The paintings and images of Guru Gobind Singh may be destroyed or stolen or washed away but his fine outstanding characteristics shall remain immortal for all times to come; his courage, his valour, his indomitable character, relentless and unbiased fight against injustice and tyranny. Certainly not retaliation.

May his pictures convey this universal message to all the human kind.

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4. Ganda Singh, "Golden Temple, Symbol of Piety and Heroism" in the *Sikh Review*, October 1982, Vol. XXX. No. 346, Calcutta, p. 24.
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10. Late Tarlok Singh "Chitrakar" artist was kind enough to permit me to photograph this painting some twenty years ago. He also painted a series of paintings of Sikh Gurus—Alas! he died unremembered and unsung.
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Arif Rahman Chughtai, Director of Chughtai Museum Trust, Lahore (Pakistan), for which I am extremely grateful to him. He is good friend of mine. His father, late Abdur Rahman Chughtai, a great artist of this Asian continent also worked at Patiala Darbar.

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## SOME LIGHT ON SIKH TENETS

JASPAL KAUR

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Amongst the world religions, Sikhism is comparatively the youngest taking its birth in Punjab a little more than 500 years ago. Religion is considered to be one of the primary institutions of human society not only affecting its economic and social life but also regulating it. Sikhism is one such religion which preaches a better human life characterised by a deep devotion to family, a simple and frugal living and honest and hard labour. Prime importance is added to human dignity and equality.

The uniqueness of Sikhism lies in the fact that it is free of ritualism and outward forms of religious service. It is a practical religion in which the spiritual and worldly lives have been assimilated for its followers. Sikhism is not merely a form of worship, it is a way of life, and a Sikh practises it as a part of his everyday living and not as something extra or external to it. It is not something separate from the other aspects of life. A Sikh cannot be religious in worship and immoral in conduct. He can live his life like any other normal human being but within the precincts of Sikhism.

For the Sikh Gurus religion was synonymous with the social regeneration of masses aiming at the well-being of entire humanity without any distinction of caste, community and region. Sikhism encompasses the whole of life in its different phases and its philosophy is not other worldly, but of this world. A Sikh has to be aware of

the present state of affairs and to pay attention to what is happening around him. He can attain salvation by engrossing himself in worldly activities in accordance with the ideals of Sikhism i.e. neither renunciation nor indulgence. There are no shortcuts to attain salvation. Thus Sikhism is more humanistic and earthly in this approach. It regards only that man as spiritually emancipated, who engages himself in productive activity, lives actively and honestly in the present world, and simultaneously involves himself in promoting the social ends of the community. There is no place for renunciation or penance or running away from life. Thus a new interpretation has been given to the old concept of salvation.

From an analysis of the teachings of the Sikh Gurus, one can get a distinct idea about the qualities that characterize the Sikh mode of living. Amongst the many such qualities, it is fruitful to discuss a few of them in the light of the teachings of the Sikh Gurus viz. family life (grihast jeevan) truthful conduct and living (sach achaar) and honest labour (kirat kumai).

The doctrine of mukti or mokasha as a Hindu religious belief has been accepted in Sikhism with the fundamental modifications that mukti is attainable and enjoyable in the present human life and in the present world. Sikhism inspires man's daily life and does not make him run away from the world of corporate social life. Thus it is a religion which has to be practically lived and experienced. Mukti is to be attained by not forsaking the responsibilities of the world but by shouldering them whole heartedly and honestly. All the Sikh Gurus were highly critical of the austerities and ritualistic practises which made man lead a life of negation and renunciation and their teachings were a clear departure from the other Indian religious traditions.

Vaishnavism, Vedantā and Nathism were the three



contemporary religious systems when Sikhism took its birth in Punjab. These three systems view the world as maya a mere illusion and not a reality. To them to live and indulge in worldly activities is foolishness and futile because mukti could be attained only by renunciation from worldly pursuits, celibacy, asceticism, yoga and the like. Vaishnavism lays great stress on sanyas and celibacy. Marriage, household duties and women are considered as the biggest hurdles in the attainment of salvation. The ritualistic practises of Nathism are even more severe. Their ear lobes are split for the wearing of mundras and they vow to observe celibacy, not to do any productive work and to sustain themselves by begging. The Vedantists also lay emphasis on renunciation, not to do any work and leaving their bodies to be cared for by others. All those who could not foresake their families and lived by hard work and labour to rear their families, had to feel guilty, having remained unable to lead the life of negation and renunciation which only could lead to bliss and Moksh according to doctrines of Vashnavism vedantism and Nathism.

The negative effect of such philosophies on the working masses can be easily imagined. Sikh Gurus rightly understood this and Sikhism is vehemently opposed to such religious traditions and its doctrine is radically different. To live in this world as a humanbeing and engage in worldly pursuits honestly and truthfully is the essence of Sikhism. The world is not considered a misery or something to be despised, but is considered as a beautiful place for the attainment of spiritual values. Participation in everyday human activities as well as household duties are not only accepted but considered as essential. One will not attain God by despising the world but by living in the world and not only knowing the truth but by living a true and honest life. Thus it is remarked that, "Guru Nanak's genius lay in the fact that he tore

himself away from this atmosphere of negation and declared himself positively in favour of worldly life, of acceptance of the duties and obligations of the human individual to the temporal and the material and at the same time of equal acceptance of the duties and obligations of religious discipline and spiritual quest for the Ultimate."<sup>1</sup>

Denouncing the practises of renunciation and celibacy, the Sikh Gurus were strong advocates of the institution of marriage and family life. Except Guru Harkrishan who died at an early age, all the Gurus were married householders. Sri Chand's claim to Guruship were surpassed by Guru Nanak as he showed leanings towards other worldliness. The practical demonstration of a householder's life by the Sikh Gurus themselves was a clear cut indication of its importance to their followers. And it was necessary to do so to show to the people that it was not by renouncing one's family that one could attain salvation. But what was required was a householder's life, a grihast jeevan, lived truthfully and honestly.

The reason why a family life was considered as invaluable by the Sikh Gurus was because it was the best place for learning to sacrifice one's-self for the family. To show love for one's family and to provide for its needs would give a definite impetus for the realisation of higher spiritual goals. Leading a pure and virtuous life of a householder was not a hurdle in any way in the spiritual ascent of man. If any renunciation was required it was of selfish and sinful acts and sensual pleasures of life.

When Guru Nank met Siddha Yogis at Sumer Parvat, he admonished them for retreating from the pain and sufferings of the world and taking shelter in the higher altitudes.<sup>2</sup> In another instance when he met some yogis at Achal near Batala, he tried to convince their leader Yogi Bhangarnath that those householders who gave charity and food to the sanyasis and yogis were far superior than

the latter,<sup>3</sup> who were only parasites and hypocrites. He preached, "If one singeth the Lord's praise, berefit of wisdom; or converts his household into a mosque to satisfy his hunger; or being workless, getting his ears torn (to pass for a yogi); or becoming a mendicant and loseth caste with the world; and though proclaimed as a Guru, beggeth from door to door; never O'men should one fall as the feet of such a one."<sup>4</sup>

Wearing a monastic garb and following external rituals and ascetic practises were all worthless. What was primarily important was living a householder's life purely amidst the impurities of the world. According to Guru Nanak, "He alone is a householder who disciplines his sense desires. And beggeth from God contemplation; austerity and self control. And giveth in charity all he can through his body. Yea such a householder is pure like Ganges water."<sup>5</sup> A man can fulfil all his ambitions and realise his destiny in a family life alone. Thus, "he alone is detached who burns his self-conceit."<sup>6</sup>

Following the injunctions of Guru Nanak, the successor Gurus gave prime importance to the concept of grihasth jeevan. Guru Amar Das declaring renunciation as futile, stated, "Leaving thy family, if thou wanderest abroad, in this, yog, consists not, O Yogi."<sup>7</sup> Similarly Guru Ram Das stated, "Some pick and eat fruits and roots and dwell in forest localities. Some roam about wearing ochre robes as yogis and solitarians. Within them is a great desire and they long for clothes and food. In vain, they waste their lives. They are neither householders nor renouncers."<sup>8</sup>

Similar are the sayings of Guru Arjan Dev who states, "Becoming ascetics some sit in trance, some are yogis, celibates, scholars and thinkers, some dwell in homes, grave yards, cremation grounds and forests. Getting up, mammon clings to their skirts."<sup>9</sup> Instead of leaving one's home and family, true Sikh is repeatedly extolled upon to

renounce the five evils of lust, wealth, ego, avarice and attachment. Thus, "the mortal who renounces mineness avarice, worldly attachment and self conceit; says Nanak, he himself is saved and saves others as well."<sup>10</sup> So there was no need of leaving this world for the ultimate bliss, but the requisite was the balanced life, of a householder with self control over all vices.

Guru Gobind Singh was highly critical of the practise of selfish ascetism and renunciation and wrote, "Oh my soul practise renunciation in this way : Consider thy house as a forest, And yourself as an ascetic, let continence be your matted hairs, And communion with God thy ablution."<sup>11</sup> Real holiness lay in following the path of righteousness and exercising selfcontrol while fully immersed in worldly affairs and household duties. Guru Gobind Singh preached, "Let wisdom by thy Guru, so instruct thyself and apply to the body the ashes of God's name. Eat sparingly and sleep sparingly and have forgiveness and compassion and love within thee. And stick ever to good conduct and contentment and rise above the three modes. Harbour neither lust in the mind, nor wrath, nor greed, nor obstinacy, nor attachment; and thou seest the quintessence of the soul and attainest unto the supreme Being."<sup>12</sup> Thus the teachings of the Sikh Gurus successfully assimilate the temporal and spiritual pursuits of life. A spiritual life can simultaneously be followed alongwith household duties. Instead of the four ashramas of Hinduism, the Sikh Gurus preached the goodness of only one ashram viz. that of a responsible householder. Thus a grihasth jeevan is a fundamental Sikh tenet wherein there is no wastage of human resources. A Sikh is free to whole heartedly participate in the normal activities of life.

Not only has a grihasth jeevan been applauded by the Sikh Gurus but their teachings also illuminate the way in which it has to be followed. Among the other principles

laid down for a balanced household life, the most essential is truthful living. A life full of falsehood, avarice, deceit and cheating have been strongly condemned by the Sikh Gurus. Repeatedly they preach to their followers to give up the above vices and lead a virtuous and truthful life. Clarifying that "The person who lives only on the tiger's food (plunder and cruelty) is called as the god of cheats,"<sup>13</sup> Guru Nank emphatically declared that "avarice is a dog, falsehood the sweeper and cheating the eating of a carrion (dead body)"<sup>14</sup> Those who commit fraud and lead a deceitful life will always be in pain.<sup>15</sup>

Following his line, the third Guru condemns falsehood and deceit in no small words, "The false of mind practises falsehood. He runs after wealth and calls himself a penitent, Deluded by doubt he wanders at all the pilgrim stations, How can such a penitent attain the supreme status.<sup>16</sup> It is further clarified, "false is the capital and false the ostentation of apostates, they practise falsehood and suffer great agony."<sup>17</sup> Thus the manmukhs and wayward persons do not lead a truthful and virtuous life and experience, in consequence, the pains and suffering of hell on this earth only.

Similarly the fourth Guru states, "Those who have deceit, wickedness and falsehood in their mind, those lepers the True Lord Himself separates away."<sup>18</sup> Falsehood and fraud remain not concealed, gilding and adulteration do finally fail."<sup>19</sup> And what is the final outcome of such a life replete with falsehood. "He practises falsehood, amasses falsehood and partakes of the food of falsehood, He dies gathering the poisonous property and wealth and in the end all is reduced to ashes."<sup>20</sup> In the similar vein are the injunctions of the fifth Guru who states, "Falsehood, crookedness and fraud are without foundation and crumble down instantly."<sup>21</sup> And therefore, "In false avarice man has wasted his human life."<sup>22</sup>

Continuing the tirade against falsehood and avarice, Guru Tegh Bahadur the ninth Guru states, "Engrossed in avarice and harboring hope of wealth, he hastens to run in ten directions, for the sake of comfort he suffers great pain and waits upon every individual, like a dog he wanders from door to door and is not conscious of Lord's meditation."<sup>23</sup> For the tenth Guru, Guru Gobind Singh, it is not the person that should be worthy of respect but it is a life full of good and moral deeds that count. Thus he says, "He who follows the discipline closely,

He is my real Sikh;

He is my master

And I am his disciple."<sup>24</sup>

Further elaborating on what the discipline underlined, he declared, "Never tell lies, nor listen to them, nor be fascinated towards them. Always practise truth and remain in the company of truthful people and act truthfully in the profession adopted by you. Do not fall a prey to corrupt practises and lead a noble life."<sup>25</sup> His Khalsa was one who had annihilated the five vices of lust, anger, greed, attachment and ego.

From the above it is clear that the Sikh Gurus were not interested in mere abstract and academic theories of religion. They wanted to change the way people lived so that truth would not remain something that was an abstract contemplation but would become part and parcel of every activity of the people. Truth was to be followed in a practical way and therefore Guru Nanak preached, "Truth is high, But higher still is truthful living."<sup>26</sup> The virtues of a truthful living have been repeatedly extolled by the Gurus whereas falsehood and avarice have been strongly condemned. Those who lead a life of falsehood and deceit have been denounced as lepers and dogs while uttering falsehood has been compared to the eating of carrion. It is due to these vices that men not only suffer so much of pain and agony but also waste away their

precious lives. Thus a balanced grihasth jeevan is one in which the vices of avarice, falsehood and deceit have no place, but the emphasis is on firm devotion to the cause of righteousness.

Another noteworthy injunction which has been equally stressed upon by Gurus is against the amassing of wealth. Being intoxicated with the collection of wealth and then being proud of it are viewed with the greatest disfavour. After amassing wealth, it is not that a man becomes contented and prosperous. Rather, "the hunger of the hungry departs not, even though he may pile up loads of the world (valuables).<sup>27</sup> Wealth is but an entangling net and those ignorant fools and apostates who wail for the sake of the perishable wealth, their lives are accursed. Guru Amar Das while advising his followers not to hanker after wealth states, "the poisonous wealth ever causes anguish. It goes not with the man nor does it yield any profit."<sup>28</sup> In a similar vein, Guru Ram Das states, "self-conceit and wealth are all poison, Attached therewith man ever suffers loss in this world."<sup>29</sup>

Elaborating further, Guru Arjan Dev vehemently attacks the amassing of wealth which he calls as false and useless.<sup>30</sup> "One amasses wealth saying 'mine' 'mine' it is but at the last moment it hoodwinks all. Gathering it some bury it in the pit, some leave not money even in dream... Some love their wealth more than their life and body; some amass it forsaking their father and mother; some keep it concealed from their sons, friends and brothers, with them even it remains not."<sup>31</sup> Not only is the amassing of wealth false and useless but the devices adopted to collect wealth are ignoble and deceitful. How true the teachings of the Guru are when he says "By continuously exercising oppression man amasses wealth, gold, silver and rupees."<sup>32</sup> Again committing sins, the mammon worshippers amass poisonous wealth.<sup>33</sup> And then even after collecting wealth, man is not at peace with himself

because his mind is not sated.<sup>34</sup>

Similarly Guru Tegh Bahadur decries the pursuit of wealth in the following words, "Wealth, wife and all other property, which thou deemest thy own, None of these shall be thy companion know thou this as true, O Nanak."<sup>35</sup> Guru Gobind Singh also states that right from the beginning, the reasons for enmity have been the possession of wealth and land and everywhere one sees pride and conceit.<sup>36</sup>

From the above it is clear that amassing wealth without honestly working for it is not permitted by the Gurus, because the fire of greed never dies down. All the Gurus make it clear that the object of life is not collection of wealth through foul means but to serve others and live honestly. Those who indulge in this futile exercise are denounced as stupid, ignorant and blind and are compared to dogs and lepers. Thus it is truthful living, in which the vices of avarice, falsehood, deceit and excessive greed for amassing wealth have no place, that has been preached by the Gurus.

Another cardinal ingredient of a balanced grihasth jeevan high lighted by the Gurus is 'kirat kamai'. It is an integral part of the way of life of a Sikh. Kirat Kamai means to earn one's living by honest, creative and productive work. A man should honestly do his work to earn his livelihood. No work or occupation pursued honestly is considered as downgraded or below status and thus the teachings of the Sikh Gurus have given work a religious sanction. Thus the people were liberated from religious restrictions and superstitions and made to work. Dignity was imparted to work however small and insignificant it might be. Also it encouraged people to actively participate in worldly activities and to perform their duties honestly.

The Guru illustrated this doctrine by setting personal examples. Guru Nanak after settling in Kartarpur, tilled his



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farm to provide for himself and his family. All his disciples too earned their living through honest means. Guru Angad twisted munj into strings for his living. The third and fourth Gurus earned their living by small trading. As means of earning livelihood Guru Arjan Dev took up trade in horses. He also encouraged agriculture, sank wells and founded new towns like Taran Taran and Kartarpur. Similar practises were followed by the other Gurus also.

Thus all the Sikh Gurus emphasized the need to do productive work and earn one's living by honest means. They greatly condemned graft, bribery and corruption and strongly opposed living by exploitation of the poor and weak. Guru Nanak denounced exploitation of man by man particularly in the name of religion. He pointed out that for a Hindu to live by exploitation was like taking beef; for a Muslim it was like taking pork and for a Sikh it was like eating a dead man's flesh.<sup>37</sup> Engaging one's self in false and dishonest occupations is futile. The fifth Guru states, "Being entangled and enmeshed in the love of false occupations, the whole world has perished."<sup>38</sup> He further elaborates, "Man steals others' wealth, commits many sins and all his sermonizing is for his livelihood. His mercurial desire is satiated not, his mind is absorbed in riches and he does the deeds of a swine."<sup>39</sup>

Thus the principle of living by honest means and not subsisting on unearned income is essential for a Sikh. "He alone, O Nanak, knoweth the way who earneth with the sweat of his brow and then shareth it with the others."<sup>40</sup> Thus living on alms and offerings to gods in temples is forbidden and so is beggary. Similarly as is evident from the *Rahatnama* of Desa Singh, Guru Gobind Singh laid down the following code of conduct for the Sikhs. "A Singh who observes discipline should earn his living by lawful means. He should minister to the needs of his household from such earnings and even by mistake

should not accept offerings." Elaborating on the daily conduct of a Sikh, Bhai Gurdas states, "He toils to earn, perform good deeds and though being great never gets his greatness noticed. "<sup>41</sup> In fact one of the essential characteristic of a gurmukh is that "he earns his livelihood by hard labour and shares his victuals with other Sikhs of the Guru."<sup>42</sup>

Thus the Sikh Gurus made kirat kamai a socio-religious obligation. This has done much to soften class distinctions and encourage equitarianism. Further no work is looked down upon, as long as it is done honestly. Caste prejudices against certain occupations were also broken down. Thus there is greater economic flexibility and vocational mobility to be seen among the Sikhs. They have not confined themselves to their traditional occupations viz. agriculture and military service alone. As a result the Sikh engineers, artisans and skilled personnel have made a mark in many large projects, such as sugar factories, steel mills and railway workshops all over India. The transport industry is much indebted to the Sikh truck drivers for helping to open up communications even in the inaccessible parts of the country. Thus it is the tenet of kirat kamai that has contributed much to characterize the Sikh as a worker of great excellence. Working honestly to earn one's living is the ideal way of practicing the Sikh religion. One must work if one wants to hold his head high in dignity. Beggary and exploitation are deeply abhorred in Sikhism. It is the Sikh tenet of kirat kamai that has made the Sikhs diligent, honest, industrious, adventurous resourceful, efficient and progressive.

The above account is a small effort to throw light on some of the Sikh tenets as envisaged in the teachings of the Sikh Gurus. Not only is there continuity and unity in the teachings of the Sikh Gurus but they are relevant to all peoples for all times. An ideal Sikh leads a fully active life wherein his spiritual and temporal need are fulfilled. Thus

a householder who cares for his family, earns his living by doing honest work, renounces the vices of falsehood, avarice and deceit, gives in charity and believes in God surely attains high standard of secular and spiritual life. Thus Sikhism denounces renunciation and asceticism. Prime place is given to the life of a householder. One is called upon to lead a homely life and to face its difficulties courageously rather than running away from day to day problems and living in isolation. Only when a Sikh strikes the balance between indulgence and abstinence can he develop a balanced personality of a gursikh. It is a consequent result of the teachings of the Sikh Gurus that the Sikh mode of living is by and large characterised by family solidarity, simple living and honest and hard labour. The Sikh tenet of kirat kamai makes a virtue of hard work and efficiency. As it is obligatory for a Sikh to shun parasitism and exploitation and subsist on lawful means the Sikhs take up whatever work is available or can be created through honest means. Thus they have built up their reputation as a hardworking and diligent people who can easily adapt themselves to any sort of environment and withstanding any sort of unusual change. The partition of India in 1947 was an unprecedented crisis in the history of the country. The Sikhs most of whom were uprooted did not lose heart but faced the calamity with boldness of character. True to their reputation of a hard working people they took up new occupations and established themselves gradually. The traditional social status of the occupation was no consideration for them. What mattered more was that livelihood was to be earned by honest means and hard work. It is a matter of pride for the Sikhs that immediately after partition, when they had lost every thing they did not beg for their living but preferred to earn their living honestly.

In independent India, Punjab, the home state of the

Sikhs, has a leading place amongst the states. The prosperity of Punjab in the post partition period is the result of phenomenal growth of the agricultural sector particularly after the reorganisation of the state in 1966, and characterised by the Green and White revolutions. The Punjab peasantry has been noted to be the sturdiest peasantry in India."<sup>43</sup> In this Punjab peasantry, it is the Sikh farmers who "represent the flower of Indian agriculture."<sup>44</sup> In fact the "Sikh farmer is the best farmer in India."<sup>45</sup> He is industrious, enterprising, dynamic and demonstrates great economic flexibility and vocational mobility. In contrast to other states of India villages in Punjab are always humming with activity and equipped with dynamics of change.<sup>46</sup> Spurred on by the teachings of their Gurus the Sikhs are always keen to improve their living conditions by honest means instead of living in poverty, isolation and stagnation. So it will not be incorrect to conclude that it has been the lives and teachings of the Sikh Guru that have shaped the character and qualities of the Sikhs and made Punjab, a land of plenty and prosperity, despite the crisis which its people have been called upon to face from time to time.

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Niharranjan Ray, *The Sikh Guru and the Sikh Society*, New Delhi, 1975, p. 58.
2. Bhai Gurdas, *Varan*, Var I, Pauri 29.
3. *Ibid.*, Pauri 39-44.
4. ਗਿਆਨ ਵਿਚੂਣਾ ਗਾਵੈ ਗੀਤ ॥  
 ਭੁਖੇ ਮੁਲਾਂ ਘਰੇ ਮਸੀਤਿ ॥  
 ਮਖਣੂ ਹੋਇ ਕੈ ਕੰਨ ਪੜਾਏ ॥  
 ਫਕਰੁ ਕਰੈ ਹੋਰੁ ਜਾਤਿ ਗਵਾਏ ॥  
 ਗੁਰੁ ਪੀਰ ਸਦਾਏ ਮੰਗਣੁ ਜਾਇ ॥  
 ਤਾ ਕੈ ਮੂਲ ਨ ਲਗੀਐ ਪਾਇ ॥
5. ਸੋ ਗਿਰਹੀ ਜੋ ਨਿਗਹੁ ਕਰੈ ॥  
 ਜਪੁ ਤਪੁ ਸੰਜਮੁ ਭੀਖਿਆ ਕਰੈ ॥  
 ਪੁੰਨ ਦਾਨ ਕਾ ਕਰੈ ਸਰੀਰ ॥

*Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, p. 1245.

- ਸੇ ਗਿਰਹੀ ਗੰਗਾ ਕਾ ਨੀਰ ॥ *Ibid.*, p. 952.
6. ਸੇ ਅਉਧੁਤੀ ਜੋ ਧੂਪੈ ਆਪੁ ॥ *Ibid.*, p. 952.
7. ਏਹੁ ਜੋਗ ਨਾ ਹੋਵੈ ਜੋਗੀ ਜਿ ਕਟੰਬੁ ਛੋਡਿ ਪਰਭਣੁ ਕਰਹਿ ॥ *Ibid.*, p. 909.
8. ਇਕਿ ਕੰਦ ਮੂਲੁ ਚੁਣਿ ਖਾਹਿ ਵਣ ਖੰਡਿ ਵਾਸਾ ॥  
ਇਕ ਭਗਵਾ ਵੇਸ ਕਰਿ ਫਿਰਹਿ ਜੋਗੀ ਸੰਨਿਆਸਾ ॥  
ਅੰਦਰਿ ਤ੍ਰਸਨਾ ਬਹੁਤੁ ਛਾਦਨ ਭੋਜਨ ਕੀ ਆਸਾ ॥  
ਬਿਰਥਾ ਜਨਮ ਗਵਾਇ ਨ ਗਿਰਹੀ ਨ ਉਦਾਸਾ ॥ *Ibid.*, p. 140.
9. ਹੋਇ ਅਉਧੁਤਿ ਬੈਠੇ ਲਾਇ ਤਾਰੀ ॥  
ਜੋਗਿ ਜਤੀ ਪੰਡਿਤ ਬੀਚਾਰੀ ॥  
ਗਿਹਿ ਮਤੀ ਮਸਾਣੀ ਬਨ ਮਹਿ ਬਸਤੇ ॥  
ਊਠਿ ਤਿਨਾ ਕੈ ਲਾਗੈ ਪਲੀਆ ॥੪॥ *Ibid.*, p. 1004.
10. ਜੇ ਪ੍ਰਾਨੀ ਮਮਤਾ ਤਜੈ ਲੋਭ ਮੋਹ ਅਹੰਕਾਰ ॥  
ਕਹੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਆਪਨ ਤਰੈ ਅਉਰਨ ਲੇਤ ਉਧਾਰ ॥ *Ibid.*, p. 1427.
11. ਰੋਮਨ ਐਸੇ ਕਰ ਸਨਿਆਸਾ ॥  
ਬਨ ਸੇ ਸਦਨ ਸਬੈ ਕਰ ਸਮਝਹੁ ਮਨ ਹੀ ਮਾਹਿ ਉਦਾਸਾ ॥੧॥  
ਜਤ ਕੀ ਸਟਾ ਜੋਗ ਕੇ ਮੰਜਨੁ ਨੇਮ ਕੇ ਨਖਨ ਬਢਾਉ ॥  

*Guru Gobind Singh, Hazare Shabad.*
12. ਗਿਆਨ ਗੁਰੂ ਆਤਮ ਉਪਦੇਸਹੁ ਨਾਮ ਬਿਭੂਤ ਲਗਾਉ ॥੧॥  
ਅਲਪ ਆਹਾਰ ਸੁਲਪ ਸੀ ਨਿੰਦ੍ਰਾ ਦਯਾ ਛਿਮਾ ਤਨ ਪ੍ਰੀਤ ॥  
ਸੀਲ ਸੰਤੋਖ ਸਦਾ ਨਿਰਬਾਹਿਬੈ ਹੈਬੈ ਤ੍ਰਿਗੁਣ ਅਤੀਤ ॥  
ਕਾਮ ਕ੍ਰੋਧ ਹੰਕਾਰ ਲੋਭ ਹਠ ਮੋਹ ਨ ਮਨ ਸਿਉ ਲਯਾਵੈ ॥  
ਤਬਹੀ ਆਤਮ ਤਤ ਕੇ ਦਰਸੈ ਪਰਮ ਪੁਰਖ ਕਹ ਪਾਵੈ ॥੩॥੧॥ *Ibid.*
13. ਸਿੰਘਚ ਭੋਜਨੁ ਜੋ ਨਰੁ ਜਾਨੈ ॥  
ਐਸੇ ਹੀ ਨਗ ਦੇਉ ਬਖਾਨੈ ॥ *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, p. 486.
14. ਲਬੁ ਕੁਤਾ ਕੂੜ ਕੂਹੜਾ ਠਗਿ ਖਾਧਾ ਮਰਦਾਰੁ ॥ *Ibid.*, p. 15.  
Similarly it is stated, "He who practises falsehood is like a dog and burns in the fire of slandering the guru.  
ਕੂਕਰ ਕੂੜ ਕਮਾਈਐ ਗੁਰਨਿੰਦਾ ਪਚੈ ਪਚਾਨੁ ॥ *Ibid.*, p. 21.
15. "Thou practised avarice, covetousness, great falsehood and carriest many burdens". ਲਬ ਲੋਭ ਮੁਚੁ ਕੂੜ ਕਮਾਵਹਿ ॥ ਬਹੁਤ ਉਠਾਵਹਿ ਭਾਰੈ ॥ *Ibid.*, p. 154.
16. ਮਨ ਕਾ ਬੂਠਾ ਬੂਠ ਕਮਾਵੈ ॥  
ਮਾਇਆ ਨੋ ਫਿਰੈ ਤਪਾ ਸਦਾਵੈ ॥  
ਭਰਮੈ ਭੂਲਾ ਸਭਿ ਤੀਰਥ ਰਾਹੈ ॥  
ਉਹੁ ਤਪਾ ਕੈਸੇ ਪਰਮਗਤਿ ਲਹੈ ॥ *Ibid.*, p. 948.  
Further, he states, "An apostate loves wealth and enshrines not affection for the Name, he practises falsehood he makes his sustenance.

- ਮਨਮੁਖ ਮਾਇਆ ਮੋਹੁ ਹੈ ਨਾਮਿ ਨਾ ਲਗੈ ਪਿਆਰ ॥  
 ਕੂੜ ਕਮਾਵੈ ਕੂੜ ਸੰਗ੍ਰਹੈ ਕੂੜ ਕਰੈ ਆਹਾਰੁ ॥ *Ibid.*, p. 552.
17. ਮਨਮੁਖ ਖੋਟੀ ਰਾਸਿਧੋਟਾ ਪਾਸਾਰਾ ॥ *Ibid.*, p. 116.
18. ਜਿਨ ਅੰਦਰ ਕਪਟੁ ਵਿਕਾਰ ਝੂਠ ਉਇ ਆਪੇ ਸਚੈ ਵਥਿ ਕਢੇ ਜਜਮਾਲੇ ॥ *Ibid.*, p. 304.
19. ਕੂੜ ਠਗੀ ਗੁਝੀ ਨਾ ਰਹੈ ਮੁਲੀਮਾ ਪਾਜੁ ਲਹਿ ਜਾਇ ॥ *Ibid.*, p. 303  
 Similarly, "Falsehood and deception wrapped up in false gilding remain not undetected."  
 ਕੂੜ ਠਗੀ ਗੁਝੀ ਨਾ ਰਹੈ  
 ਕੂੜ ਮਲੀਮਾ ਪਲੇਟਿ ਧਰੇਹੁ ॥  
 ਕੂੜੀ ਕਰਨਿ ਵਡਾਈਆ ਕੂੜੇ ਸਿਉ ਲਗਾ ਨੇਹੁ ॥ *Ibid.*, p. 311.
20. ਕੂੜ ਕਮਾਵੈ ਕੂੜ ਸੰਘਰੈ ਕੂੜਿ ਕਰੈ ਆਹਾਰੁ ॥  
 ਬਿਖ ਮਾਇਆ ਧਨੁ ਸੰਚਿ ਮਰਹਿ ਅੰਤਿ ਹੋਇ ਸਭੁ ਛਾਰੁ ॥ *Ibid.*, p. 1423.
21. ਕੂੜਿ ਕਪਟਿ ਬੰਚਿ ਨਿੰਮਨੀਆਦਾ ਬਿਨਸਿ ਗਇਆ ਤਤਕਾਲੇ ॥ *Ibid.*, p. 381.
22. ਝੂਠੇ ਲਾਲਚਿ ਜਨਮ ਗਵਾਇਆ ॥ *Ibid.*, p. 175.
23. ਲੋਭਿ ਗ੍ਰਸਿਉ ਦਸਹੁ ਦਿਸ ਧਾਵਤ ਆਸ ਲਗਿਉ ਧਨ ਕੀ ॥੧॥  
 ਰਹਾਉ ॥ ਸੁਖ ਕੇ ਹੇਤ ਬਹੁਤ ਦੁਖ ਪਾਵਤ  
 ਸੇਵ ਕਰਤ ਜਨ ਜਨ ਜੀ ॥  
 ਦੁਆਰਹਿ ਦੁਆਰਿ ਸੁਆਨ ਜਿਉ ਡੋਲਤ ਨਹੁ ਸੁਧ ਰਾਮ ਭਜਨ ਕੀ ॥੧॥  
*Ibid.*, p. 411.
24. Bhai Daya Singh, *Rahat Nama*, As cited in S. S. Kohli, *The Life and Ideals of Guru Gobind Singh*, (New Delhi, 1986).
25. *Mukat Nama*, as cited in above.
26. ਸਚਹੁ ਉਰੈ ਸਭ ਕੈ ਉਪਰ ਸਚੁ ਆਚਾਰੁ ॥ *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, p. 62.
27. ਭੁਖਿਆ ਭੁਖ ਨ ਉਤਰੀ ਜੇ ਬੰਨਾ ਪੁਰੀਆ ਭਾਰ ॥ *Ibid.*, p. 1.
28. ਬਿਖਿਆ ਕੈ ਧਨਿ ਸਦਾ ਦੁਖੁ ਹੋਇ ॥ ਨਾ ਸਾਥਿ ਜਾਇ ਨ ਪਰਾਪਤਿ ਹੋਇ ॥  
*Ibid.*, p. 665.
29. ਹਉਮੈ ਮਾਇਆ ਸਭ ਬਿਖ ਹੈ ਨਿਤ ਜਗ ਤੋਟਾ ਸੰਸਾਰਿ ॥ *Ibid.*, p. 300.
30. "Why art thou crying for wealth and riches ?  
 Love of worldly valuables is all fake."  
 ਧਨ ਧਨ ਕਹਾ ਪੁਕਾਰਤੇ ਮਾਇਆ ਮੋਹ ਸਭ ਕੂਰ ॥ *Ibid.*, p. 250.
31. ਮੇਰੀ ਮੇਰੀਕਰਿ ਕੈ ਸੰਚੀ ਅੰਤ ਕੀ ਬਾਰ ਸਗਲ ਲੇ ਛਲੀਆ ॥  
 ਏਕਹਿ ਸੁਪਨੈ ਦਾਮ ਨ ਛਡੈ ॥  
 ਏਕ ਸੰਚੀ ਤਜਿ ਬਾਧ ਮਹਿਤਾਰੀ ॥  
 ਸੁਤ ਮੀਤ ਭ੍ਰਾਤ ਤੇ ਗੁਹਜੀ ਤਾ ਕੈ ਨਿਕਟ ਨ ਖਲੀਆ ॥ *Ibid.*, p. 1004.
32. ਕਰਿ ਕਰਿ ਅਨਰਥ ਬਿਹਾਝੀਸੰਪੈ ਸੁਇਨਾ ਰੂਪਾ ਦਾਮਾ ॥ *Ibid.*, p. 497.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 708. ਸੰਚੀਤਿ ਬਿਖਿਆ ਛਲੰ ਛਿਦ੍ਰੰ ॥
34. "Satisfaction he attains not in the pursuit of wealth".  
 ਤ੍ਰਿਪਤਿ ਨ ਆਵੈ ਮਾਇਆ ਪਾਛੈ ਪਾਵੈ ॥ *Ibid.*, p. 279

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Also, "There is no peace in earning much wealth".

ਸੁਖ ਨਾਹੀ ਬਹੁਤੇ ਧਨਿ ਖਾਟੈ ॥

*Ibid.*, p.1147.

35. ਧਨ ਦਾਰਾਸੰਪਤਿ ਸਗਲ ਜਿਨਿ ਅਪੁਨੀ ਕਰਿ ਮਾਨਿ ॥

ਇਨ ਮੈ ਕਛੁ ਸੰਗੀ ਨਹੀ ਨਾਨਕ ਸਾਚੀ ਜਾਨ ॥

*Ibid.*, p. 1426.

36. Guru Gobind Singh, *Bachitra Natak*.

37. ਹਕ ਪਰਾਇਆ ਨਾਨਕਾ ਉਸੁ ਸੁਅਰ ਉਸੁ ਗਾਇ ।

*Guru Granth Sahib*, p. 141.

38. ਪਲਚਿ ਪਲਚਿ ਸਗਲੀ ਮੂਈ ਝੂਠੈ ਧੰਧੈ ਮੋਹੁ ॥

*Ibid.*, p. 133.

39. ਪਰ ਦਰਬ ਹਿਰਣੰ ਬਹੁ ਵਿਘਨ ਕਰਣੰ ਉਚਰਣੰ ਸਰਬ ਜੀਅ ਕਹ ॥

*Ibid.*, p. 1360.

40. *Ibid.*, p. 1245. ਘਾਲਿ ਖਾਇ ਕਿਛੁ ਹਥਹੁ ਦੇਹਿ ॥ ਨਾਨਕ ਰਹੁ ਪਛਾਣਹਿ ਸੇਇ ॥੧॥

41. Bhai Gurdas, *op.cit.*, Var 28, Pauri 15.

42. *Ibid.*, Var 32, Pauri 1.

43. M. L. Darling, "*The Punjab Peasantry in Prosperity and Debt*", New Delhi, 1997 (Reprint), p. 41.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 117.

45. Kusum Nair, *Blossoms in the Dust*, London, 1961, p. 67.

46. *Ibid.*

# THE CONCEPT OF SUFFERING AND LIBERATION IN SIKHISM—A PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVE

G. S. SANDHU  
PARMINDER KAUR

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Almost in all religions problem of suffering and liberation has occupied central importance throughout the period of philosophic contemplation; attempts have been made to identify the nature of suffering, its causes and its remedies. In fact every religion highlights the suffering of life in its own way, for the aim of religion is the redemption from sin and suffering. With a happy world, perhaps, there would have been little need for religion.

Even though human suffering and death are the two themes analysed in Adi Granth, still Sikhism is not all about philosophy of suffering.

“Pleasure and Pain are a set of robes that must keep on wearing.”

(Guru Nanak, Var Majh I)

Even though it considers life to be an unending succession of torments, it believes in the liberation power of an ethical discipline and the perfectibility of human nature. The world with all its sufferings seems adapted to the growth of goodness and a possible state of liberation. Sikhism does not preach the mere worthlessness of life or resignation to the ultimate doom. It is not a doctrine of despair. It asks us to revolt against evil and attain a life finer quality.

The topic of suffering in all its dimensions finds detailed discussion in Gurbani. Guru Nanak Dev ji in Var



Malar (ਵਾਰ ਮਲਾਰ) refers to three kinds of suffering. First that result from separation from God; second that is caused by hunger, and the third resulting from the unfailing advent of the messenger of death. However, suffering at all organic levels constitutes its physical dimension, depicted in terms of disease and pain. Redemption from suffering is one of the key motives of the teachings of Sikh Gurus.

According to Sikhism, in order to rise higher into spiritual plane one has to avoid all such paths which obstruct his journey to the Lord. To escape from the pervasive evils of suffering is another goal of moral life, and liberation. As such five vices viz., *Kāma*, *Krodha*, *Lobha*, *Moha* and *Ahankar* are regarded as the greatest enemies of man. These vices are the obstracles in the way to God. So, *Haumai*, worldly desires and *Maya* may be called the main causes of suffering. If one suffers from egotism or clinging to the worldly desires, one's mind wanders through these five vices. One does not see God in his Creation and remains in duality or transmigration of soul. One is advised by Guru Nanak Dev ji to recognise the self and lead a life abandoning ego. Salvation consists in the unmaking of ourselves when one acts according to 'His' Command, one can see him in His Creation and his *haumai* gets extinct. In Gurbani, individual is advised to shun five vices and to tame the ego.

Some perspectives in intellectual dimensions of *dukha* are also available, where voice is raised in protest against human folly, social inequality and persecution and even divine indifference. In the following lines social conditions and attitudes of the kings are reflected. Good acts are those which aim at the welfare of others, bad acts those which aim at self-advantages.

The age is like drawn sword  
The kings are butchers  
Goodness has taken wings and flown

(Guru Granth Sahib, p. 145)

And again Guru Nanak Dev ji was pained to see the

suffering of innocent people and even asked God in following words :

Terrible has been the slaughter,  
Loud have been the cries of innocent sufferers  
Did not these awaken pity in Thee O Lord.

(*Guru Granth Sahib*, p. 360)

Guru Gobind Singh's predecessors had tried all possible means to eradicate evil but with no visible success. The evil was organised in the world and spreading on the wings of the sword. To face it virtue must be organised and must get the help of the same sword. If affairs have gone beyond all control, it is for the virtuous to take sword in hand.

In Buddhism, death is considered a form of suffering. But unlike Bhddhism, in Sikhism death is not be feared. According to Kabir Ji it is the death alone by which the eternal, perfect bliss is attained. So in Sikhism there is a brighter aspect of dukh too. Guru Nanak Deve Ji says "*Dukh dāru Sukh rog*." Sukh is the root cause of all evils. But the thorns of flesh may be blessing; it helps one to turn towards spiritualism. Suffering may be removed by *Nām* and with the Grace of God.

Guru Nanak Dev Ji often said "*Nanak Dukhia sabh sansar*." But life itself is not suffering as is believed in Buddhism. When Farid ji complained of universal sufferings, the Guru Ji said that the whole earth was a garden, of course, with thorns. Those who have got the right attitudes enjoy it and are not effected by its seamy side. So, it is the attitude of our mind which makes the world a place of misery. Those with whom God is pleased, they participate and enjoy all the gifts of God.

(*Guru Granth*, p. 966, Mahala V, in reply to Farid)

Sikh philosophy exhorts us to cultivate true love for all creation. This glowing emotion must fill the whole universe and result in an outflow of abounding goodwill. The Guru asks us to suppress the will to live on the lower plane and cultivate the will to live well and gain the ultimate peace.

Various terms such as *Moksha*, *Mukti*, *Nirvana*, *Sahaja*,

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*Parma pad*, *Param gat* and *Turia vastha* have been used for liberation, ultimate peace and self realization. In his book "*Ethics of the Sikhs*" Dr. Avtar Singh has mentioned two aspects of self realization in Sikhism.

1. *Jiwan Mukti*
2. *Avan Jan Mite*

1. *Jiwan Mukti* is a type of person who shuns his ego. The *Jiwan Mukti* dispels ignorance, and darkness, sheds all vices and has complete control over himself. According to Guru Nanak Dev Ji such a man remains detached within his house.

2. *Āvan Jān Mite* means the cessation of coming and going or cessation of transmigration and absorption in the Absolute (*Jotī jot Samānā*). In Sikhism a devotee on reaching that blessed stage acquires "sameness in essence" like "water in water."

According to Guru Nanak Dev Ji all Karma is lost when one reaches the state of liberation and *sachkhand*. One does not cross the worldly ocean alone but makes others, who are also essence of his own self, swim across it. The attainment of mukti according to Nanak Dev Ji is possible with humility and efforts. One attains salvation only after one shuns ego, greed, desire and filth from within and reflection on hte Name and service of the Guru. These may be regarded as the most important means for the achievement of liberation. The real yearning, according to Guru Nanak Dev Ji, should be for harmonisation of one's soul with the Supreme Spirit.

Sikhism does not believe in asceticism for liberation from suffering. Guru Nanak Dev Ji in his missionary travels met some Jaina priests and argued against the method of living that was practised by them. According to him, salvation is not attainable by extreme asceticism. Even in Guru Granth Sahib when ever Guru Ji spoke about the renunciation of worldly life he became unusually strong in his condemnation of ascetic way of life. The first of thirty-three *Swayyas* of Tenth Guru also make an indirect reference to this practice of Jainas.

"They pluck their hair, drink dirty water, beg and eat other's..... spread out the filth and smell it, do not use natural water, having smeared their head with ashes, they pluck their head like sheep. they give up their ancestral occupation. They are always in mood of despair and never live a life of prosperity, they walk in a single file, brush the ground before they lay their foot on it. All this, they do to avoid killing life, but Guru Nanak Dev said, 'it is God, who giveth and taketh life.'"

Jaina Sangha or Community contains monks and nuns and lay brothers and lay sisters. In Buddhism the clergy is organically connected and former were emphasized at the expense of latter. But unlike the Buddha or Mahavir the Gurus never established an order of mendicants, Biksus, monks and nuns. However, Guru Gobind Singh definitely organised Khalsa to get salvation from social suffering. The purpose of Guru Gobind Singh's taking up arms was to counter atrocities on people by Muslim rulers.

In Sikhs everybody can attain liberation without any distinction of caste, creed and sex. But according to Digambaras school of Jainas women cannot attain *moksa*. In *Uttardhyana Sutra* the young monks were especially warned against the dangers of falling into the snares of women. Several legends narrated in the *Uttardhyana* and *Jataka* books. But in Sikhism the status of women is equal to men or you can say, in some sense higher to man.

ਸੋ ਕਿਉ ਮੰਦਾ ਆਖੀਐ ਜਿਤੁ ਜੰਮਹਿ ਰਾਜਾਨ

All Gurus insisted on worldly life. A person can attain salvation while leading a family life. They themselves led a household life and worked for their living. The Guru replied 'thou hast become an anchorite after abandoning thy life and yet thou goest to beg to the houses of familymen.

We may conclude that all Sikh Gurus not only set out theoretical principles, rather in their own lives they have practised those principles and common man is told about the simplest way by which one can get out of worldly

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bondage, overcome suffering and achieve Mukti in this life. Only one is to shed one's egoism, lead one's life in God's 'Hukam', remember 'His Name'; he should act on ethical principle that is ਨਾਮ ਜਪਣਾ, ਕਿਰਤ ਕਰਨਾ ਅਤੇ ਵੰਡ ਕੇ ਛਕਣਾ। He should also follow the ideals of 'Seva' and 'Parupkar'. In this way one can reach the stage of *sachiara* and then with the grace of God one can attain liberation.

## TRANSFORMATION THROUGH SIKHISM

BHAGAT SINGH

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The main inspiration for Sikh code of conduct came from the teachings of the Sikh Gurus. The whole outlook of the community was influenced by religion and their social and political behaviour was guided by the views of the Gurus. Religion is the righteous and noble way of life and a system of values and as such Sikhism is a set of coordinated doctrines serving as an ideal to be achieved and practised by its followers. Sikhism sets forth purity of life as the highest object of human endeavour. Loyalty, chastity, honesty, justice, mercy and temperance are among the virtues on which vital stress is laid. Guru Nanak taught, 'Truth is higher but higher still is truthful living'. Religious purity, if it is to be meaningful, must be complementary to ethical purity which can be attained only through a life of dedicated service to fellow-beings. The Sikh Gurus repeatedly emphasised equality in the ranks of the society. Our lack of faith in the brotherhood of man blurs our vision and we fall into the habit of lending greater weight to dis-similarities than to similarities.

When the Sikhs became rulers, they made all efforts in keeping with the traditions of the Gurus to actively promote and rigidly enforce morality and righteousness in the conduct of their affairs.

In the light of the ideals of Sikhism we examine here, not very strictly but a little generously as to how faithfully the Sikh men, women and rulers abided by the prescribed code of conduct and underwent metamorphosis.

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### Sikh Women

Sikhism worked as potent force to plead the cause of the emancipation of Indian womanhood. The Gurus advocated equal status for women with men, in all spheres of life. They repudiated the old and deep-seated belief that a woman was inferior to man and condemned the social evils of *purdah*, infanticide and *sati* (self-immolation of a woman on the funeral pyre of her dead husband). Guru Nanak sang :

From women is our birth,  
In the women's womb are we shaped.  
Women are our friend,  
And from the woman is the family.  
If one woman dies, we seek another.  
Through a woman are the bonds of the world.  
O, why call women evil,  
who giveth birth to kings.

(Var Asa Mohalla I, *Guru Granth Sahib*, p. 473.)

As against many religions, Sikhism believed that a woman, who was the pivot of the household, was the helping hand of man in the achievement of salvation. Guru Nanak's sister Bibi Nanaki, was a lady of high calibre and spiritual elevation. Guru Angad's wife, Mata Khivi, managed the *langar* at the Gurus' place. Guru Angad's daughter, Bibi Amro, was a noble lady who transformed the life of Guru Amar Das. Guru Amar Das's daughter Bibi Bhani's dedicated life was a perennial source of inspiration to all womenfolk of the Sikhs. Guru Gobind Singh's mother, Mata Gujri, proved equal to the very trying and difficult days through which she passed and became an embodiment of supreme sacrifice. Guru Gobind Singh's spouse Mata Sahib Devan (Kaur) played the role of the Khalsa's mother.

Many ladies like Deep Kaur, Anup Kaur and Mata Bhag Kaur, through their marvellous deeds inspired the coming generations as a result of which innumerable Sikh women performed most daring deeds in the battle-field

and also in the field of diplomacy in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Sikh traditions of bravery and sterling qualities brought about a total transformation in the Sikh women's overall personality and mental attitude towards chivalry, self respect and high sense of dignity. In the words of William Francklin, "Instances indeed have not unfrequently occurred in which these Sikh women have actually taken up arms to defend their habitations from the desultory attacks of the enemy and throughout the contest behaved themselves with an intrepidity of spirit, highly praise-worthy."<sup>1</sup>

The Sikh Gurus honoured the women-folk as the symbol of domestic harmony and happiness, social cohesion and unity. The wives of the Sikh Gurus, by serving in and running the *langar* (free mess) and by preaching high ideals of equality, love and sacrifice, set examples worthy of emulation by other women.

The status of Sikh ladies, as compared to Hindu and Muslim ladies was, undoubtedly, much superior. They were able to stand by the side of their husbands in difficult situations.

The Sikh women had a manly demeanour and had a reputation of chastity. The Sikh ladies of the royal houses, when an occasion arose, actively participated in state affairs. They occasionally took charge of state administration and their contribution to Sikh polity as rulers, regents, administrators and advisers had been creditable indeed, "The Sikh ladies ruled with vigour and diplomacy", says General Gordon.<sup>2</sup> To quote Griffin, "The Sikh women have, on occasions, shown themselves the equal of men in wisdom and administrative ability."<sup>3</sup> Usually the dowager *ranis* were involved in commendable works. Rani Sada Kaur, widow of Sardar Gurbakhsh Singh Kanaihya and mother-in-law of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, was well versed in the affairs of the state and commanded her soldiers in the battle-field.<sup>4</sup> She was a

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very shrewd lady with a thorough grasp of statecraft.<sup>5</sup> In the words of Muhammad Latif, "Thus fell after having figured prominently in the Punjab politics for about thirty years, the high-spirited Sada Kaur, one of the most remarkable women in the history of the Punjab. She had been the mainstay of Ranjit Singh's power, the ladder, whereby that monarch had been enabled to reach the summit of his greatness. She was the companion of his toils and to her energy and influence he chiefly owed the success in his early exploits."<sup>6</sup>

Mai Desan, widow of Charhat Singh Sukarchakia, was a great administrator, an experienced and a wise diplomat, who conducted the civil and military affairs dexterously.<sup>7</sup> Her administration was better than that of men. Rani Rattan Kaur, widow of Tara Singh Ghaiba, was a brave and an able lady who kept the Lahore Darbar forces at bay for quite some time till the gate keepers were bribed by the Lahore Darbar army.<sup>8</sup> Mai Sukhan, the widow of Gulab Singh Bhangi, strongly defended the town of Amritsar against Ranjit Singh for some time.<sup>9</sup> Dharam Kaur, wife of Dal Singh of Akalgarh, after her husband's imprisonment by Ranjit Singh, mounted guns on the walls of her fort and fought against the Lahore Darbar forces.<sup>10</sup> Rani Chand Kaur, widow of Maharaja Kharak Singh and Rani Jindan, widow of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, played important roles in the Lahore Darbar politics.

After Sardar Baghel Singh's death in 1802, his two widows, Ram Kaur and Rattan Kaur, looked after their territories very well. Ram Kaur the elder Sardarni maintained her control over the district of Hoshiarpur which provided her a revenue of two lakh rupees, and Sardarni Rattan Kaur kept Chhalondi in her possession, fetching her an annual revenue of three lakh rupees. She administered her territory efficiently.

From the Patiala House also many names like that of Mai Fato, wife of Sardar Ala Singh, Rani Rajinder Kaur,

Rani Aas Kaur and Sahib Kaur may be mentioned. Rajinder Kaur, the first cousin sister of Raja Amar Singh of Patiala, was a highly self-respecting, determined and brave woman. In the words of Lepel Griffin, "Rani Rajinder (Kaur) was one of the most remarkable women of her age. She possessed all the virtues which men pretend are their own courage, perseverance and sagacity—without any mixture of the weakness which men attribute to women."<sup>11</sup> Sahib Kaur was proclaimed as Prime Minister of Patiala at the age of 18. She managed the affairs, both in office and in the battle field, wonderfully well. Later, when her husband, Jaimal Singh Kanaihya, was imprisoned by his cousin, Fateh Singh, she hastened to Fatehgarh at the head of a strong force and got her husband released.

In 1794 when the commander of the Maratha forces, coming northwards, sent a message to Sahib Kaur, the Prime Minister of Patiala, for submission, she preferred to settle the issue in the battle field. The armies came to grips near Ambala. She infused new spirit in her disheartened soldiers, led a surprise attack on the Marathas, and in the words of John J. Pool, "With mingled feelings of fear and respect they (Marathas) turned their forces homewards and gave up the expedition. Thus Patiala was saved by the skill and daring of Rani Sahib Kaur."<sup>12</sup>

The role of Rani Desan of Nabha and Daya Kaur of Ambala in shaping the destinies of their territories was no less noteworthy. About Rani Daya Kaur (1786-1823) Lepel Griffin writes, "She was an excellent ruler and her estate was one of the best managed in the protected territory."<sup>13</sup>

These ladies were well known for their administrative acumen, grasp of political situations and dexterity in handling and organising defence. The above achievements of the Sikh ladies were indisputably the result of inspiration they drew from Sikhism—its ideals and *rahit*. Sikhism equally worked its miracles on Sikh women in all walks of life.

### The Baptised Sikhs

Guru Gobind Singh (1675-1708) felt that the Sikhs needed reorganisation in order to bring about internal cohesion and to provide external defence. Retaining the basic idea of administering *pahul* to the Sikhs a new ceremony of giving the nectar in place of the old practice, which some of the people had started misusing to create independent followings of their own, was started by Guru Gobind Singh. The Guru wanted to strengthen the organisation of the community by making steel an integral limb of a Sikh and this evolved out of the Sikhs a powerful engine of revolution, a force to fight tyranny and injustice. Within a few days of adoption of the dramatic procedure of initiating the Khalsa, many thousands (to some almost bordering on a lakh)<sup>14</sup> people hailing from different parts of the country got themselves baptised in a few days. It worked a miracle in abolishing the old distinctions. After initiation, a person could claim and was readily given the status equal to any other member of the Khalsa Panth.<sup>15</sup>

In the words of Teja Singh and Ganda Singh, "Even the people who had been considered as dregs of humanity were changed as if by magic into something rich and strange. The sweepers, barbers and confectioners, who had never so much as touched the sword and whose whole generations had lived as grovelling slaves of the so called high classes, became under the stimulating leadership of Guru Gobind Singh, daughty warriors who never shrank from fear and who were ready to rush into the jaws of death at the bidding of the Guru."<sup>16</sup>

Guru Gobind Singh brought a new people into being and released a new dynamic force into the arena of Indian history. He invested the Panth with his personality or in other words, the Khalsa Panth was to be the Guru in future. He told his Sikhs, "I have bestowed the Guruship on the Khalsa (the baptised Sikhs). Khalsa is my very self and I shall always live in the Khalsa."<sup>17</sup> The complete charge of the temporal leadership was given to the Sikhs

in 1708 during the last moments of his earthly existence.

Of his close identification with the congregation Guru Gobind Singh provided a unique example at the initiation ceremony (1699) in which he, the supreme head of the religious organisation, voluntarily surrendered his authority to his disciples and adopted the usual procedure of being baptised by the same disciples, who, a short while ago, had been baptised by him.<sup>18</sup>

By converting the *Guru sangat* into the Khalsa the creator of the Khalsa raised his creation to a status superior to himself when he said :

It is due to them that I am holding an exalted place.

I was born to serve them.

Through them I reached eminence.

What would I have been without their kind and ready help.

There are millions of insignificant people like me.<sup>19</sup>

According to Senapat the aim of Guru Gobind Singh in initiating the Sikhs with the double-edged sword or founding the Khalsa Panth, was to build up a community that would live a virtuous life and be able to rescue the people from evil-doers and the tyrants.<sup>20</sup> The basic character of the Sikh Panth to be good and virtuous was never allowed to be changed. Once the Sikhs asked Guru Gobind Singh why the Sikh rules of conduct prohibited them from carrying away the women of the Muslims as captives as a retaliatory measure. To this the Guru replied, "I wish to raise the Panth—the Sikh community—to a much higher plane and not to push it down into the depths of hell." In their struggle for independence or sovereignty the Sikhs always maintained this lofty ideal of the Guru.

According to Gokal Chand Narang, "Guru Gobind Singh was the first Indian leader who taught democratical principles and made his followers regard each other as *Bhai* or brother and act by *gurmata* or general councils."<sup>21</sup>

This new practice of baptism brought with it tremendous changes in the Sikh code of conduct. In the

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words of Mohammad Latif," Guru Gobind Singh instituted a new code of law which not only treated the religious subjects, but infused a spirit of valour and emulation into the minds of his followers and inflamed them with zeal for deeds of heroism and bravery in the field. He incorporated in it a narrative of his own exploits in a glowing and even hyperbolical style. He placed the four great sects of the Hindus on the same level and declared that none was greater than the others thus adding materially to the strength of his nation. He laid the foundation stone of that vast fabric which the Sikh nation was not long after enable to build on the ruins of the Muhammadan power in the Punjab and emancipate his tribe from foreign thralldom and persecution, giving it the character and rank of a military nation."<sup>22</sup>

The Tenth Master brought Guruship on a level with his followers. It was a revolutionary and democratic step when in 1699, after initiation, he solemnly undertook to abide by the same discipline that had been enjoined upon the Sikhs to follow. Although the Khalsa was designed by the Guru himself yet the Guru was so much charmed and fascinated by his own creation that he saluted it as his own ideal and master." It was introducing a spiritual socialism in the domain of religion."<sup>23</sup>

The Khalsa commonwealth did not belong to any individual not even to the Guru—the creator of the order—but it belonged to those who constituted it. In this way a new type of democracy took birth in this land. The Khalsa as combined body of the Sikhs, was made the supreme authority among the Sikhs in all matters.

J. D. Cunningham writes, "the last apostle of the Sikhs did not live to see his own ends accomplished, but he effectively roused the dormant energies of a vanquished people and filled them with a lofty although fitful longing for social freedom and national ascendancy, the proper adjuncts of that purity of worship which had been preached by Nanak. Guru Gobind Singh saw what

was yet vital and he relumed it with Promethean fire. A living spirit possesses the whole Sikh people, and the impress of Gobind has not only elevated and altered the constitution of their minds, but has operated materially and given amplitude to their physical frames. The features and external form of a whole people have been modified, and a Sikh chief is not more distinguishable by his stately person and free and manly bearing, than a minister of his faith is by a lofty thoughtfulness of look, which marks the fervour of his soul, and his persuasion of the near presence of the divinity."<sup>24</sup>

Guru Gobind Singh told his followers that the force by itself was no evil, it was its misuse that made it so. He felt that ideals of humility and surrender had no appeal to a tyrant whose soul was deadened by repeated acts of oppression and who used and understood the language of cold steel alone. He was thoroughly convinced that force had to be met by force and that is why he almost deified the sword. He considered it to be the hand of God to punish the evil-doers with :

Sword, thou are the protector of the saints,  
Thou art the scourage of the wicked;  
Scatterer of sinners, I take refuge in thee;  
Hail to the Creator, Saviour and Sustainer,  
Hail to Thee, Supreme.<sup>25</sup>

This must not be understood to mean that Guru Gobind believed in the dictum that 'might is right'. It was assumed that the wielder of sword must be imbued with a divine mission. It should be used for the protection of the oppressed and for the furtherance of righteous acts. The sword used for such purposes signifies divine beneficence. Guru Gobind Singh symbolized God in the weapons of war. He is presented as the punisher of the evil and destroyer of the tyrant. But if the sword is used for oppression and for the attainment of power, it loses all its significance. Even where the use of the sword is permissible, it is to be used, only as a last resort. "When

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all other means have failed, it is but righteous to take to the sword."<sup>26</sup>

The Guru expected of the baptised Sikhs to fight only a holy war (*Dharam Yudh*) against the enemies of righteousness and for the protection of good virtues. With the Sikh gospel to light their path the Sikhs were opposed to religious bigotry and communal hostility. The Sikhs had in the first half of the eighteenth century suffered a lot at the hands of the fanatical Mughal rulers of the Punjab but when they took over the control of the Punjab they were not revengeful or intolerant towards the Muslims as such. What they had disliked in the Mughal government, they would not do that themselves. It was really noble of them to have so soon forgotten about the wounds inflicted on them in the recent past. It was in keeping with the traditions of their Gurus.

Qazi Nur Muhammad, who accompanied Ahmad Shah Durrani to the Punjab in the winter of 1764-65 on the Afghan invader's seventh invasion, has given an account of Durrani's invasion. He has recorded therein his own first hand impressions of the character and fighting qualities of the baptised Sikhs. The Qazi in his intense hatred for them as opponents of the Afghans trying to establish their power in the Punjab, he uses abusive language. But he was impressed by the lofty character and bravery of the Sikhs in their struggle for freedom. He says, "Do not call the Sikhs 'dogs' because they are lions and are courageous like lions in the field of battle. In no case would they slay a coward nor would they put an obstacle in the way of a fugitive. They do not plunder the wealth or ornaments of a woman, be she a well-to-do lady or a humble servant. There is no adultery among them nor are these people given to thieving nor there are house-breakers among them. They do not make friends with adulterers and house-breakers. They are not from the Hindus. They have a separate religion of their own."<sup>27</sup>

The new organisation, Guru Gobind Singh's *magnum*

*opus* was, in the words of Indubhusan Banerjee," a fully democratic compact community armed to the teeth struggling to maintain what is right and fighting incessantly tyranny and injustice in all their forms."<sup>28</sup> The baptised Sikhs—the Khalsa—was charged with the responsibility of promoting, with force if necessary, the cause of righteousness. One of the most interesting features of the Khalsa was the idea of commonwealth. Before Guru Gobind Singh breathed his last he had taken every possible care to promote the corporate aspect of the Khalsa brotherhood." It was in Sikhism," says Banerjee," that a sense of corporate unity gradually evolved."<sup>29</sup> Guru Gobind Singh, after the creation of the Khalsa, advised the Sikhs to take decisions or pass *gurmata*s through a council and this measure gave a form of federative republic to the Sikhs."<sup>30</sup>

Thus, we see that the community was united and integrated through baptism or *amrit* prepared by the double-edged sword. All members of the community enjoyed equal privileges with one another. By receiving *amrit* from the *Panj Piaras* (five beloved ones) the Guru had exploded the myth of his superiority to his followers. This equality with one another, common external appearance, common leadership and common aspirations bound the Sikhs together into a compact mass, raising their strength manifold. With that strength they fought against the Afghan invaders, Mughal high-handedness and British rulers.

### Sikh Jats

From the rough tribals the Jats were chiselled by the teachings of the Sikh Gurus into marvellous people with qualities of superb gentleness, hospitality, honesty and unique bravery. Whenever some new invaders or travellers came to the Punjab through the passes of the North West Frontier of this province many of them chose to settle here, finding it a better place to live. Thus Punjab became the permanent home of Pathans, Balochs,



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Ghakhars, Afghans, Turks, etc. Many castes, communities or tribes already lived in the Punjab. The Jats were more prominent among them. The scholars hold different opinions about their origin. James Tod believes that the Jats were related to different Rajput families of Rajasthan. Some believe that they were Scythians from Central Asia and some others say that they belonged to the Jertik tribe that has been mentioned in the Mahabharat. Still some others think that they had their origin in the Indian Aryans who came to the Punjab from Rajasthan as we believe of the Phulkians.

With the advent of Muslims into the Punjab some of the Jats accepted Islam under the invaders sword. According to Indubhusan Banerjee Guru Arjan is said to have converted almost the entire Jat peasantry of the Majha tract and there could be little doubt that by the time of Guru Hargobind the Jats, formed by far, the preponderant element in the Sikh community. The character of the Jats imperceptibly modified the Sikh system as it was bound to do.<sup>31</sup> We had Sikh Jats, Hindu Jats and Muslim Jats, most of them having common sub-castes or *gotras*. We have Bajwas, Manns, Gills, Tiwanas, Chathas, etc., among Sikh, Hindu and Muslim Jats. There was a sizeable chunk of the Jats who remained outside the pale of Sikhism, most of them beyond the boundaries of the Punjab, especially in the present U. P., Rajasthan and Haryana states who came to be known as Hindu Jats. They remained outside the influence of Sikhism. They could not become the pride of the community as the Sikh Jats. Most of the Muslim Jats are in Pakistan and some of them are in India as well.

Professor Irfan Habib of Aligarh University believes that these Jats of the Punjab can be traced to a pastoral people of the same name who appear in old archival records dating from the period between the seventh and ninth centuries and who were distinguished by a notable absence of social or economic stratification. From Sind

these Jats moved northwards via Multan into the Punjab and eastwards across the Jamuna river. In the course of their migration they changed from pastoralists to peasant cultivators. Their inherited egalitarian traditions attracted them to the teachings of the Sikh Gurus, who gave them positions of high authority in the new Panth.<sup>32</sup>

The role of the Jats was of considerable importance in the Khalsa Panth, particularly for the developments which took place during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries with the change or shift from the Khatri to the Jat leadership in the community. The author of the *Dabistan-i-Mazahib* noted that though the Gurus had been the Khatri, they had made the Khatri subservient to the Jats who were considered a low caste among the Vaishyas. As a result of this change most of the big *masands* of the Guru were the Sikh Jats.<sup>33</sup>

The new features of Sikhism came to represent the dominance of the Jat culture which Guru Gobind Singh proclaimed in 1699 as the essentials of Sikhism. Love of freedom and warlike spirit of the Jats could no longer be denied a place within the system.<sup>34</sup>

Irfan Habib further remarks that the Jats were the peasants in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries who had to bear a heavy burden of land revenue and a great degree of oppression of the ruling classes of the Mughal empire. This situation was bound to provoke peasant revolts. Thus, the militant development of the Sikh community during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries can have one major explanation in this resort to armed violence by the Jat peasantry when the economic pressure became increasingly intolerable.<sup>35</sup>

The economic pressure on the Sikh Jats could be one of the reasons for arraying themselves on the side of Banda Singh Bahadur, converting his movement into an agrarian revolution, as Khushwant Singh believes.<sup>36</sup> It may be partly true but a more powerful reason was the religious persecutions suffered by the Sikhs at the hands

198 CREATION OF THE KHALSA : FULFILMENT OF GURU NANAK'S MISSION of the Mughal government. It led the Sikh Jat peasantry to take up arms under the leadership of Banda Singh to replace the tyrannical government. Banda Singh was, indeed, very lucky to have such spirited and fearless Sikh Jats known for their intrepidity and sacrifice as his followers.

After Banda Singh's execution on 10 June 1716, with brief intervals of respite here and there, the history of the Sikhs is a record of a great struggle between the Jat Caesars on one side and the Mughals or the Afghans on the other. It ultimately resulted in the occupation of the Punjab by the Sikhs about the middle of the sixties of the eighteenth century. During the prolonged Sikh struggle for their liberation from the foreign yoke the rural Jat peasants headed the fighting wing of the movement and also helped these fighters for liberation by providing protection, supplying them with means of living, hiding them in their houses in small batches and joining their ranks.<sup>37</sup>

By their tribal characteristics these Sikh Jats were unamenable to a despotic rule, still more to a hostile foreign rule. In the government of their villages they were much more democratic than others. They had less reverence for hereditary rights and had a preference for elected headmen.<sup>38</sup> On becoming Sikhs the Sikh democratic traditions strengthened their views.

George Campbell, a civilian officer, who had been looking after the administration of the Sikh states after they came into the hands of the British, writes that Mehraj, now in Bathinda district of Punjab, remained an independent republic till it came under the British protection. "It continued to be a completely independent self-governing republic down to my time—the only real well established republic that I know in India. It was diplomatically recognised as a state and had its own state administration and state justice. There was no chief or hereditary ruler. The state was ruled by *panches* or

representative elders.<sup>39</sup> It was a Sikh Jat republic, functioning efficiently about the middle of the nineteenth century when Campbell took charge.

Campbell further writes that "I remember one strong village (of Sikh Jats) in Kaithal which for generations had made it a point of honour never to admit a government officer within their walls. The villages were almost all walled and fortified. The inhabitants of the village paid the revenue over the wall and that was enough."<sup>40</sup> Campbell further writes, "My experience of the village institutions on the Satluj, where perhaps they are at their best, made me appreciate them very much indeed and I think that they were not only good for India but for some other countries as well. In fact I can deliberately say that far from imposing any ideas on these people it was from them that I learnt ideas of local self-government which I retain to this day and which I have brought with me to my native country."<sup>41</sup> The Sikh Jats learnt it from the Sikh Gurus that they must take all decisions through the village *Panchayats* elected democratically. They always followed the teachings of the Sikh Gurus in letter and spirit.

These Sikh Jats committed to their religion have also been nostalgically disposed towards their land and could never tolerate to part with it. When they were dispossessed of it and made to wander in the jungles it was natural that they should try to come back to the lands which they and their ancestors had been ploughing for generations. And in a bid to get political freedom they had paralysed the Mughal power in the Punjab and consequently the Mughals had abdicated for all intents and purposes. These Sikh Jats could not allow the opportunist foreign invaders—the Afghans—to steal a march, over them in establishing sovereignty in the province. Being the sons of the soil and through a long-drawn struggle for independence and a series of sacrifices, the Sikh Jats had a genuine case for the possession of the

Punjab both on moral and legal grounds. Jats remain as ever a rural community heavily committed to agriculture and deeply devoted to Sikhism.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh had a judicious discrimination in the selection of his officials. He was shrewd enough to understand that Sikh Jats were pre-eminently a fighting class (besides being agriculturalists) and as such could nowhere be more profitably employed than in the national defence.

Ibbetson wrote in 1883, "The Jats are the backbone of the Punjab by character and physique as well as by locality. They are stalwart, sturdy yeomen of great independence, industry and agricultural skill and collectively form perhaps the finest peasantry in India."<sup>42</sup> However sturdy the Jats may have been in the British experience the Sikh Jats have offered much more than their competence and skill in two fields—agriculture and military. Their participation in politics, transport, industry and sports has also been remarkable.

It is through Sikhism that their experience as rulers and their dominance in rural Punjab has elevated them well above their humble origins. In terms of status no Sikh Jat feels inferior to any one on earth and never considers him downtrodden.<sup>43</sup>

To conclude, their determined courage and unconquerable spirit of resistance always kept their flame in high splendour. Sikhism moulded the Jats into a marvellous community. Persecutions could never bend their spirits. It is an unforgettable lesson of history that persecution stimulates the spirit that it designs to suppress.

Writing about Sikh Jats Khushwant Singh says, "It was the baptised keshdhari (having full grown hair on head) Jats who had been the chief instruments of the Sikh rise to power and consequently became the land owning aristocracy during the rule of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Under British rule, Jats maintained their position as the

premier caste among the Sikhs—superior to the Brahmans, the Kshatriyas (from whom the Gurus had sprung) and the Vaishyas. This position was not achieved by Muslim or Hindu Jats in their respective communities."<sup>44</sup>

Lepel Griffin, an Indian Civil Service officer could not miss to note that "The Jat race is for manliness, honesty, strength and courage, second to no race in the world."<sup>45</sup>

### **Sikh Rulers**

The mainsprings of the ideas of the Sikh chiefs were the teachings of the Gurus. The Khalsa ideals served as a beacon light for the Sikh chiefs. Whenever the people felt their leaders likely to stray away, out of ignorance, from their ideals, they showed them the right path. The Sikh chiefs dared not, therefore, defy the Sikh code of conduct. The Panth or the Khasla commonwealth was considered by all the Sikhs as a very sacred creation of the Gurus, reared into final shape by Guru Gobind Singh. So great was the respect for the creation of the Khalsa that none could ever think of doing any thing in violation to the tenets laid down for the members of the Panth.

In respect of their duties towards the Khalsa commonwealth, no Sikh, including the Sikh chiefs, enjoyed any exception. None could pose to be above the Panth. No single individual or a group of individuals could be considered as superior or equal to the entire body of the community. No Sardar could ever think like the Mughal ruler that he belonged to a different category and was one specially blessed and destined by God to rule over others and exercise and enjoy some special and superior rights and privileges vis-a-vis the whole of the Panth. He always kept before his mind that his position was not due to any of his personal qualities but was due to the grace of the Guru and the Khalsa. The Sikh chiefs, time and again, declared that they were the humble servants of the Panth, subservient to its will, working for the good and pleasure of the Khalsa commonwealth.

To take *amrit* (baptism of the double-edged sword) and become a member of the Khalsa was required of every Sikh. He who was not duly baptised could not be elected as their leader. They all had to adopt the *rahit* (code of conduct) or discipline of the Khalsa and abide by it. Jassa Singh Ahluwalia received *amrit* from Sardar Kapur Singh<sup>46</sup> and Raja Amar Singh Phulkian prided in having received it at the hands of Jassa Singh Ahluwalia.<sup>47</sup> The founder of the Kanaihya Misal, Amar Singh Sanghania (Kingra), considered it absolutely necessary to baptise a person into a 'Singh' before accepting him into his *derah* or camp. Similarly, Charhat Singh's essential condition for recruitment to his contingent was that the incumbent must be duly a baptised 'Singh'. Those who were not already initiated into Sikhism with the baptism of the double-edged sword were baptised by him before joining his ranks.<sup>48</sup> The Sardars of the Misals were generally known by the appellation of *Singh Sahib*.

The Gurus had enjoined upon the Sikhs to take their decisions through *panchayats* or councils, and all important decisions relating to common interests of the community must have the approval of those for whom they were meant. The Sikh chiefs were alive to the democratic ideals inculcated by the Gurus and they followed them to the best of their power. The *gurmata* was a strong expression of this ideal of democratising the panthic decisions. The practice of electing a leader of the Misal in the earlier stages and electing the leader of the Dal Khalsa were in pursuance and fulfilment of the same ideal of republican and democratic spirit of the Khalsa.

The Sikh chiefs ruled in the name of the Guru and the Khalsa as is apparent from their coins. An important aspect of their victory over their enemies was that it was the triumph not of any individual leader or leaders but of the Khalsa or the Sikh commonwealth. No wonder, therefore, the Sardars founded their states and attributed their successes to the Gurus whom they believed to be the

real founders and masters of their commonwealth.

Guru Nanak had expressly told his followers that, "It is the duty of the king to administer justice. Only he should (be able to) occupy the throne who is capable of holding that (exalted) office (and is fit to discharge his obligations to the people). Only they are the true Rajas who have recognised the truth."<sup>49</sup>

The Sikh rulers had fully realised that 'dominion can subsist in spite of mischief but cannot endure with the existence of injustice. However crude the methods of investigation and trial they might have adopted, the Sikh chiefs were known for their love of justice. Every ruler at the time of his investiture solemnly promised in the presence of the *Guru Granth Sahib* to always keep before him, in the performance of his duties, the Sikh code of conduct, the law of the land and the customs of the society.

A high standard of war morality was placed before the Sikhs by the Gurus and the former punctiliously observed it." They never harassed the old, infirm and women," says Qazi Nur Muhammad in his *Jangnama*.<sup>50</sup> Polier wrote that," it is true that they seldom kill in cold blood or make slaves."<sup>51</sup> And "during any internecine disputes their soldiery never molests the husbandmen."<sup>52</sup>

Under the influence of the teachings of the Sikh Gurus, the Sikhs had disregarded the caste distinctions, difference of high and low, untouchability, etc. In the matter of origin, growth and development of the Misals the castes had no place. No Misal was named after any caste or sub-caste of any chief or Misaldar. The leaders of the Misals originally belonged to the peasant, carpenter or any other profession, it was immaterial with the Sikhs. The leader should be a member of the Khalsa. The *amrit* or the Sikh baptism had elevated them all to the same level and made them members of the same casteless Khalsa fraternity.

The Gurus had enjoined upon their followers to serve



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humanity. Guru Nanak had said, "Service, in the world above, shall find for one a seat in the court of the Lord."<sup>53</sup> Guru Angad Dev exhorted his followers that, "if one serves with selflessness, then alone he gets honours."<sup>54</sup> The Gurus personally set high examples of *sewa* (service).

The examples of the Gurus were the guidelines for their followers. Kapur Singh Faizullapuria was tipped by the *sangat* for the title of *nawab* offered by the governor of Lahore when he was fanning the Sikh congregation. The Sikh Sardars and Misaldars always kept before them the motto : "The service of humanity is the service of God". The Sikh rulers were well known for performing *sewa* in the Gurdwaras and other holy places.

The chiefs always maintained their free kitchens to supply food to the way-farers as well as to the poor and the needy and they paid special attention to this part of the service in the event of a famine.<sup>55</sup> The famine of 1783 occurred in Budh Singh's time. He is said to have sold all his property and to have fed the people with grains from the proceeds."<sup>56</sup>

It is interesting to know that the Sikh Sardars who were so well known in the art of war were no less adept in the art of peace. Sardar Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, Ala Singh Phulkian, Lehna Singh Bhangi and Charhat Singh Sukarchakia were, no doubt, great soldiers, but as history bears witness, they knew well how to bring about conditions of settled life and peace. In the words of the author of the *Gujrat Gazetteer*, "the names of Sardar Gujjar Singh and Sahib Singh are often in the mouths of the people, who look back to their rule without the smallest bitterness. They seem, indeed to have followed an enlightened liberal policy. Sparing no effort to induce the people, harried by twenty years of constant spoliation, to settle down once more to peaceful occupation."<sup>57</sup>

We generally find the Sikh rulers equating and identifying themselves with their soldiers and declaring themselves as the humblest servants of their subjects.

From the letters exchanged between the Sardars and collected by Dalpat Rai in 1794-95, we notice that almost invariably all the Sardars or the rulers of the Sikh Misals were addressed as 'Singh Sahib', 'Bhai Sahib' or 'Khalsa jio'. For example Bhai Fateh Singh, Bhai Amar Singh, Bhai Gulab Singh (ff-44-45), Khalsa Jai Singh (f-17), Bhai Ranjit Singh jio (f-104) and Singh Sahib Bhai Sahib Dal Singh jio (f-13). These titles were applicable to every member of the Sikh gentry. The Sikh rulers liked to be addressed by these plain and simple titles, which as referred to above maintained their identities with the Sikhs.<sup>58</sup> Nawab Kapur Singh, Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, the 'Sultan-ul-quam' and Sardar Ala Singh, are not the solitary examples to be found amongst the wonderful Sikh rulers who were thoroughly committed to the teachings of the Gurus. As Maharaja Ranjit Singh was the offspring of the eighteenth century he did not depart from the deep influence or impress of Sikhism on the conduct of his predecessors. He never acted in opposition to the wishes of his people who could express themselves in his favour or against him. Although the full-fledged king of the Punjab he refused to sit on a throne. Even when he reached the summit of power he never arrogated to himself the distinction of an absolute sovereign. Rather, in speech, writing and action, he represented himself as a member of the Sikh community. Under him we observe a complete departure from the accepted traditions of oriental courts where protocol was rigidly observed to keep the monarch as far away from the subjects as possible. But Ranjit Singh kept himself in close touch with his people.

As in the case of the Sardars of the eighteenth century the Maharaja also did not rule in his own name or in the name of the his family or Misal. He wielded power in the name of the Khalsa. "In the early days Ranjit Singh liked to be addressed by the plain and simple title of 'Singh Sahib'—a title applicable to any member of the Sikh gentry. The old Sikh chiefs even addressed him

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occasionally as brother."<sup>59</sup> He always felt that he was holding that office through the Guru's kindness before whom he bowed as his servant.

As the tradition goes, once his Prime Minister Dhyan Singh told the Maharaja that as he was their ruler he should not tie a cloth round his waist like the humble servants. The Maharaja enquired, "In whose name the coin is struck?" Dhyan Singh told that it was in the name of Guru Nanak. The Maharaja smilingly told him that the ruler was the one in whose name the coins were struck and Ranjit Singh was only the humble servant of that ruler. He considered himself to be the *kukar* (dog) at the door of the Guru and the Panth. He is also said to have called himself a *raptia* (reporter cum watchman) The Maharaja would often proclaim himself to be nothing more than the mere drum (Ranjit *nigara*) of Guru Gobind Singh, adding that his purpose was only to assert the supremacy of the Khalsa. He never arrogated to himself any high sounding titles but on the contrary, adopted the impersonal title of *Sarkar* denoting the government responsible for law and order. The princes were addressed as Khalsa Kharak Singh, Khalsa Sher Singh and Khalsa Naunihal Singh. This shows the Maharaja's attachment to the Khalsa.

In referring to his government, he always used the term Khalsaji or Sarkar-i-Khalsa as he felt that he was the founder of a kingdom which derived its legitimacy from the Khalsa commonwealth—the mystic entity in which resides all sovereign powers. And verily all his diplomatic correspondence was carried on in the name of the Khalsa. His coins did not bear his effigy or his name. His principle coin was called Nanakshahi (of Nanak). He named his chief forts after the names of the Gurus, for example, the fort of Gobindgarh at Amritsar was built in the name of Guru Gobind Singh and the garden of Rambagh laid out in Amritsar was named after Guru Ram Das. The official form of salutation in the whole of the state was *Waheguru ji Ka Khalsa, Waheguru ji ki Fateh*—the Khalsa belonged to

the Lord and victory also belonged to Him. All official oath-taking ceremonies were performed in the presence of the Holy Book—the *Guru Granth Sahib*.

Ranjit Singh rejected the prevalent theory of the rulers' infallibility. He, it seems, remembered the words of Guru Nanak : *Bhullan andar sabh ko abhull Guru Kartar*" that is, every one is fallible and Supreme Creator alone is infallible, and therefore, never behaved like an infallible autocrat. We have two orders preserved in the family archives of the Fakir Brothers at Lahore. The photographic copies of original (in Persian) have been published in *The Real Ranjit Singh* (facing pp. 31-32) by Faqir Waheed-ud-Din, the great-grandson of Faqir Nur-ud-Din.

One of the *farmans* (orders) is addressed to Syed Fakir Nur-ud-Din, the governor of Lahore, in 1825. It was as under :

It is decreed by His Highness (The Maharaja) that no person in the city should practise high-handedness and oppression on the people. Even if His Highness himself should issue an inappropriate order against any resident of Lahore it should be brought to the notice of His Highness so that the order may be amended. Second *farman* issued in 1831 was addressed to Sardar Amir Singh and Fakir Nur-ud-Din. It reads as under :

If His Highness (the Maharaja) or his son Prince Khark Singh or Prime Minister Dhyani Singh or Raja Suchet Singh or any other Sardar commits an inappropriate act he should be told to refrain from committing inappropriate acts. If they do not desist from that it should be brought to the notice of His Highness.

Through these *farmans*, as we see the Maharaja authorised Syed Fakir Nur-ud-Din and Sardar Amir Singh of Lahore to withhold and bring to his notice for amendment any order of the Maharaja himself, of the royal princes, the Prime Minister or of the chief Sardars if in the opinion of the Syed or the Sarkar, it was inappropriate and against the interests of the people.

These *farmans* are certainly unique in as much as they throw overboard the time honoured legal fiction upon which the fact of kingship is based—that the king can do no wrong. These are perhaps, the only orders of its kind in history issued by a king authorising a subordinate officer of the state to withhold any order issued by the king himself which in the opinion of that officer appeared to him to be inappropriate and oppressive.

All the Sikh rulers had been religious but not communal. In the words of George Campbell "They were not exclusive and unduly prejudiced in favour of their own people but employed capable Mohammadans and others almost as freely as Sikhs."<sup>60</sup> Ali-ud-Din Mufti writes that Lehna Singh Bhangi gave turbans and bestowed honours on *qazis* and *muftis* on the occasion of Id.<sup>61</sup> William Francklin bears witness to the fact that 'the Sikhs allow foreigners of every description to join their standard and to sit in their company.'<sup>62</sup> It was Sikhism that bestowed on the Sikhs these noble qualities of humility, humaneness, respect and regard for all people irrespective of their caste, colour or creed, as sons of the same Almighty Father.

Summing up we may say that with the Sikh gospel to light their path the Sikhs were instinctively opposed to religious bigotry and communal hostility. Far from retaliating in a spirit of fanaticism the Sikhs followed the policy of perfect toleration towards those who did not belong to their faith. As the Sikhs had fought for freedom to profess the faith of their choice, they respected this right for other people as well when they came to assume the government of the country.

The Sikh religion does not accept anybody entitled to superior status because of his birth in a so called higher family. It discarded the ancient Hindu restriction on the low caste *shudras* studying the holy scriptures. Among the Sikhs we find many people who were *shudras* by birth but on becoming Sikhs, acted as Sikh preachers and soldiers.

The Jats who were unamenable to any discipline before their conversion to Sikhism, became noble people after accepting Sikh faith. They never committed outrage on women and torture on men and they never compromised over morality. The Sikh Guru emancipated the Sikh women from male chauvinism and from the rigid social and moral barriers erected against her by the dictators (of social and moral commandments) like Manu, the law-giver. Through Sikhism a woman grew and evolved into a distinguished entity characterised by Sikh scriptures. Sikhism provides that women have equality in worship, equality in society, freedom in wielding arms, freedom of speech and preaching, freedom to act as a priest and freedom from superstitions and empty rituals.

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## SOCIAL HARMONY IN SIKHISM

GURCHARAN SINGH

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In the case of nations which are historically and structurally constituted of diverse ethnic or social groups, numerous and varied religious denominations, multi-lingual geographical areas, widely uneven economic and cultural social state and opposing political ideologies, the process of integration and social harmony becomes an urgency even for the sheer survival of a nation.

A little over five hundred years old, Sikhism is the most modern religion not only in age but also in its outlook on life. Guru Nanak (1469-1539), the founder of the Sikh religion and the symbol of cultural synthesis was one of the most outstanding religious figures in the history of Indian culture. The story of this new religion of Guru Nanak is the story of mankind. During the course of its short existence it has laid emphasis on equality of man, universal brotherhood and social harmony among people of all walks of life. Bhai Gurdas (1558-1637), who has given graphic exposition of Sikh religion and philosophy, has painted the following picture of the prevailing religious conditions in the country during his times :

There are four classes of the Hindus and four sects of the Musalman,

Ram and Rahim are the names of the same one God.

But in ignorance their followers, the Hindus and Musalmans have taken to diverging paths.<sup>1</sup>

Guru Nanak also felt the pulse of the times. His

indignation had been aroused by the hypocrisy and cant that stalked throughout the land. He, at once resolved to devote his life to the service of his nation and by precept and example bring his people back to the religion of simplicity and sincerity and make them once more able to stand their ground as a nation.

"The whole system of (Guru) Nanak leavened the whole Hindu thought in the Punjab and improved the moral and spiritual tone of the whole people." According to G. C. Narang : "Here was now for the first time after ages of dissension and discord a hero whom every Hindu could call his own and of whom every Hindu could feel justly proud." "The appearance of Nanak", according to Narang, "was a great step towards arousing consciousness of a common nationality."<sup>2</sup>

Hinduism and Islam were the two major religious traditions which Guru Nanak encountered in the Punjab. Many aspects of these faiths attracted his attention and his hymns abound in references to them. Guru Nanak made a powerful attack on the sacerdotal classes of both communities and declared that all people were equal in the eyes of God, who he said, was the common Father of all. "Men are brothers," he said, "and must live as brothers guiding their action by justice and love."<sup>3</sup>

Guru Nanak travelled throughout the length and breadth of India. He also visited Macca, Medina and Baghdad. Throughout his travels, the message conveyed by him was one of Universal brotherhood, love and harmony. He fearlessly proclaimed :

I have appeared in this world to indicate the way unto men. I have rejected all sects and only know one God, who I recognise in the earth, the heavens and all directions.<sup>4</sup>

On the eve of Guru Nanak's appearance "segregating instinct had become an inbuilt part of Indian ethos." Guru Nanak and his successors took concrete steps to expose and counter caste system which had emerged a separatist

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force over the centuries. It were the Sikh Gurus by whom  
"several bridges of understanding were built to span  
chasms" that divided one religion from the other. Guru  
Nanak said :

We are bound by common fatherhood of God and the  
brotherhood of man. There is no element of separation  
or distance between us.

Guru Nanak emphatically said :

There is no Hindu, no Musalman.

According to W. Owen Cole :

It meant that there is one god who may be reached  
through Hinduism and Islam but who lies beyond them  
and transcends both, that he discloses himself to Hindu  
and Muslim alike as he wishes, and that he has ordained  
own way of life for all men and women.<sup>5</sup>

Guru Ram Das (1574-81), the fourth Sikh Guru, also  
proclaimed :

All of us breathe the same air and have been fashioned  
out of the same clay by the Creator. Our spiritual light  
is common.

Although we look different, the grace of the Guru enables  
us to see the oneness in mankind.

Guru Tegh Bahadur (1664-75), the ninth Guru,  
emphasised :

Eradicate hatred from your own heart,  
mind and reason,

And you will find the entire Universe friendly and a well-  
wisher.

Guru Gobind Singh (1675-1708), the Tenth Master's  
approach was no way different. He wrote :

The apparent differences that strike you as separating  
you from the people and nations around you are really  
to be traced to external factors, like dress, food, colour  
and language. Essentially we are all one, having a similar  
structure of the body, being guided by the same inner  
spirit and belonging to one God.

In fact Guru Nanak and the other Guru did not  
criticise any religion. They only criticised the ways of the  
lives of such of their followers as had strayed from the

path, who merely professed religion but did not follow its essential teachings.

The Sikh Gurus took practical steps to integrate the society, otherwise divided into water-tight compartments of castes and creed. These measures were *Sangat*, *Pangat* and *Langar*. Unity of thought could come only with practical belief in oneness of God, and a real brotherhood of man could be created, according to Guru Nanak, through congregation (*Sangat*) which recognised no distinctions of castes and creeds. This was, in fact, the base upon which Guru Nanak erected superstructure of a society after his dreams. Guru Nanak's idea of *Sangat* worked wonders. It were these *Sangats* where all, irrespective of caste and creed sat together to hear the sermons of the Guru and sing His hymns. It came to be an organised 'fellowship' of the Sikhs. The *Sangat* was used by the Sikh Gurus to guide and help the society come out of the false practices and develop social harmony among the people of all walks of life.

Guru Nanak also introduced inter-dining by establishing free kitchens, popularly known as *Guru-ka-Langar*. Here were all to sit in one row or *pangat* regardless of caste, creed or a social status. These three-fold institutions had a practical impact on the minds of the people. "Meeting in Sikh *Sangats*, the Hindus and Muslims and the highest caste Brahmans and the lowest of the low *Sudras* were all brought to a common social level." Henceforth equality and fraternity were learnt in practice and all divisions and distinctions discarded. A confidence was evoked among the people, hitherto considered outcaste, that here was a faith in which they could get a place of honour and self-respect and sit like man and man.

Guru Angad (1539-52), the Second Guru, continued these institutions in a still more vigorous way. Guru Amar Das (1552-74), the Third Guru made it mandatory for all visitors to partake of the food served in the *langar* before

they had an interview with him. This was strictly adhered to. As tradition has it, even Akbar, the great Mughal emperor (1556-1605), as also Rajput Raja of Haripur were given no relaxation in this and had to sit in *Pangat* where they were served *Guru-ka-Langar*. Akbar was so much impressed that he expressed his desire to contribute to the success of the *langar* by making a grant of revenue-free land to the Guru. In the successive years *Langar* became an essential feature of Sikhism. The Sikh devotees rendered enthusiastic help by providing both money and free labour and that helped the Guru to make a big success at the *Langar*. Guru Nanak has emphasized the importance of *Langar* in his following hymn :

He alone, O Nanak, Knoweth the way,  
who earneth with  
the sweat of his brow and then  
shareth it with others.

The spirit of service cleanses one's mind of vanity, pride and conceit and fills it with humility. It is in this way one becomes a useful member of the society working for its good and advancement. This path of service came to be the badge of the followers of Sikh Guru which spontaneously resulted in fellow-feeling, love and social harmony in the society.

Guru Arjun Dev (1581-1606), the Fifth Guru, taught us in his famous composition *Sukhmani* (Psalm of peace) that your life is worthless if your soul is not moved at the sight of pain and agony in fellow human-beings and render them service in their hour of need. At the tour of Tarn Taran, he himself alleviated the suffering of lepers for whose treatment he also built a lepers' home there.

#### **Universal Outlook :**

*Eko pita Ekas Ke Ham barik*  
(The one Lord is the father of all and we are the children  
of the same lord).

Sikhism had right from its inception a strong consciousness of the corporate social life. In fact "it is the

most distinct feature of Sikhism to have evolved a world-wide vision in which spiritual ideals and ethical values were meant to condition and influence all the human relations." The following verses are the index whither the mind of Guru Nanak worked :

The temple and the mosque are the same,  
The Hindu worship and the Musalman prayer are the same,  
All men are the same,  
It is through error they appear different.  
Allah and Alakh are the same,  
the *puranas* and the *Koran* are the same,  
They are all alike;  
It is the one God who created all.<sup>6</sup>

Guru Gobind Singh was far ahead of his times in his approach towards Universal outlook when he expressed that all humanity was one and that difference among peoples of different countries were due to different geographical and historical factors. He said :

The people of East and West, whether living in the mountains of the Himalayas or in the towns of India, Afghanistan, Persia, or France (Europe), all sing thy praises and follow thy path.<sup>7</sup> (Akal Ustat)

According to him :

*Mans ki Zat Sabhai ekoi pahchanbo*

(The whole mankind should be recognized as one).

*Sarbat Da Bhala* (Universal welfare) is sought by the Sikhs in their daily prayer.

**Adi Granth :** *Adi Granth* compiled in 1604 by Guru Arjun and given the status of living Guru by the tenth master, is the best specimen of the Sikh approach to social harmony and universal brotherhood. Guru Arjun, while compiling this sacred Granth, not only included in it the hymns of the Sikh Gurus but also Hindu Bhaktas and Sufi saints. Among them were Baba Farid Ganj-i-Shakar (1173-1265), a Muhammadan, Kabir, born of Muhammadan parents, Jai Dev, Trilochan, Sur Das and Ramanand were all brahmans, Pipa, Shikan and Beni of unknown castes, Dhanna, a Jat and other four viz. Nam Dev, Sain, Sadana

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and Ravi Das belonged to Sudra caste. "Every time a Sikh bows his head before the Holy Book, he bows it not only before his Sikh Gurus alone but also before Kabir, the weaver, Ravi Das, the cobbler and Sadana, the butcher." There are also the writings of 15 Bhattas included in the Adi-Granth. They were all Brahmans. Thus 75 percent of the authors of this sacred Granth were Hindus by faith as well as by birth.

**Creation of the Khalsa :** Creation of the Khalsa by Guru Gobind Singh on the *Baisakhi* Day of the year 1699 A. D. was yet another great institution leaving behind the message of social harmony. By creating this institution, Guru Gobind Singh wanted to fight the prevailing social and cultural tyranny. It was to realize this dream that Guru Gobind Singh called upon a strong gathering assembled at Anandpur Sahib (Distt. Ropar) in the Shivaliks, to come forward to sacrifice their lives at the altar of their religion. Five persons who came forward to offer their lives one after the other were Daya Ram, a Khatri from Lahore, Dharam Dass, a Jat of Hoshiarpur, Muhkam Chand, a Khatri From Dwarka (Gujrat), Sahib Chand of Bidar (Karnatak) and Himmat Rai from Jagan Nath Puri (Orissa) all belonging to different castes. They were all baptised by the Guru and elevated to the position of 'five beloved ones of the God'—*Panj Piaras*. Every one had to sip 'Amrit' from a common vessel thereby joining them in eternal brotherhood and casting away the barriers of caste and creed. In a still more democratic spirit the Guru got himself baptized at the hands of these 'five-beloveds' his own creation. That is why it is said of Guru Gobind Singh—

Wah ! Wah ! Guru Gobind Singh,  
Ape Gur-Chela.

**Sikhism and Islam :** Of all the relations of Sikhism with other religions one with Islam is most interesting. There are some striking similarities with the basic truths asserted by Islam between the first *Sura* of the *Koran* and

*Mulmantra* of the *Adi-Granth*. Both insist on the acceptance of the existence of the Almighty and spell out His attributes. Both also insist on the need of His Grace for attaining salvation. Both look upon Him as the sustainer of the world and omnipresent.

*La Illah, Il Allah,*

*Ya Muhammad Rasool Allah.*

(There is no God except one God, Muhammad is His Messenger).

This speaks of the monotheistic character of Islam which is also true of Sikhism.

All through, Guru Nanak assumes the inevitability of Islam in India, and the necessity of treating the Muslim as one of the twin elements in the vast Indian humanity.<sup>10</sup>

Guru Nanak is known to have had a Muslim minstrel named Mardana as his constant companion in his odysseys. This companionship was symbolic of the future attitude of the Sikhs towards Muslims. Hence the Muslim was to be treated as a friend, with regard and love. This tradition has actually been operative in the course of the history of the Sikhs.

Tradition has it that Humayun, the son and successor of Babur met Guru Angad at Khadur Sahib (District Amritsar) and sought his blessings. Akbar, the great Mughal ruler had very cordial relations with Guru Amar Das (1552-74), Guru Ram Das (1574-81) and Guru Arjun (1581-1606). He was all praise for the spirit of equality, fraternity and service to the humanity prevalent among the Gurus. Akbar even offered a few villages to Bibi Bhani daughter of Guru Amar Das, for smooth running of *Langar*. In fact, in Sikhism, Akbar saw a reflection of his own faith.

### ***Din-i-Ilahi***

Tradition also has it that Guru Arjun while laying the foundation of the Holy Temple, the Hari Mandir at Amritsar, called in the famous Muslim saint of Lahore Sain Mian Mir, to bless it.<sup>11</sup> Guru Hargobind built a



mosque in the then newly founded town of Sri Hargobindpur, on the bank of river Ravi, thus vindicating the basic unity of all religions. It is well known that during the traumatic period of 1947 when all Muslim population of the Punjab was forced to leave India, the Sikhs did not allow the Muslims of Malerkotla to go only because one of the rulers of this state, Sher Muhammed Khan, had protested against the execution of Guru Gobind Singh's two tender aged children—Sahibzadas Zorawar Singh and Fateh Singh, under orders of Mughal Faujdar of Sirhind, Wazir Khan. They have maintained this happy relationship with the Muslims in general ever since.

It is well known that organised Muslim authority came into conflict with Sikhism at a fairly early stage in its history. Guru Arjun and Guru Tegh Bahadur suffered martyrdom at the hands of Jahangir and Aurangzeb respectively. Despite all that Sikhism had relations of tolerance and friendliness towards the Muslims and Islam. Guru Hargobind's and Guru Gobind Singh's objectives do not appear for a revolutionary struggle or to avenge the unjust execution of their fathers.<sup>12</sup> If the two Gurus raised an army, it was just defensive. Never did they initiate a war of their own. In fact Guru Gobind Singh accepted Mughal rule as a fact of history. That the Guru's attitude towards the reigning Mughals was neither that of a rebel nor of a sworn opponent is evident from these lines occurring in the *Vachitra Natak* of Guru Gobind Singh :

There are two houses—Baba Nanak's and Babur's  
Both these are ordained by the Lord himself;  
This one (Nanak's) is leader in faith,  
While in that one (Babur's) inheres the  
sovereignty of the earth.<sup>13</sup>

The Sikhs were seen as the militant arm of Hinduism.<sup>14</sup> Guru Tegh Bahadur espoused the cause of the Kashmiri Pandits against their forcible conversion to Islam—an act which enraged Aurangzeb against the Guru leading to the latter's martyrdom in November 1675. Guru

Gobind Singh testifies the sacrifice of his father in the *Vachitra Natak* :

The Lord protected their paste mark and sacred thread and  
performed a mighty deed in kali-yug.

This heroic deed he performed to protect Dharma,  
Gave up his head but not his passion.<sup>15</sup>

Guru Gobind Singh, played a unique role in the history of Sikhism. His and those of his predecessors activities showed that they were not against Islam but against the tyranny of the rulers of the times inflicted upon the masses. It was because of this attitude of the Sikh Gurus that the response of the Muslims in support of Gurus was overwhelming. It was Pir Badru-ud-Din, popularly known as Pir Budhu Shah of Sadhaura (Dist. Ambala), who "presented seven hundred followers to the Guru at the battle of Bhangani (1686). Pir was later put to death by the Viceroy of Sirhind for the crime of assisting the Guru".<sup>16</sup> When the Guru was going about in the jungles of Machhiwara, after the battle of Chamkaur, it were the Muslim devotees of Guru Gobind Singh, Nabi Khan and Ghani Khan, who saved him from falling into the hands of the enemy. Again Guru composed his famous epistle *Zafarnama*, sitting in the house of his Muslim Persian teacher Pir Muhammad at Dina Kangar (Dist. Faridkot). In the court of Guru Gobind Singh were fifty-two poets belonging to all religions. Among them were Alam Shah. Hans Ram, Dhanna Singh, Tan Sukh, and Sharda. All of them enjoyed equal blessings and patronage of the Great Guru.

After the death of Aurangzeb, Bahadur Shah succeeded in 1707 on the Delhi throne. Unmindful of the atrocities inflicted by Aurangzeb on Hindus and Sikhs, Guru Gobind Singh gladly responded to cooperate with him when called upon to do so.

Similarly after the death of Guru Gobind Singh, Banda Bahadur gave a tough fight to the Mughals. Despite the fact that Bahadur Shah had issued on

December 10, 1710, a royal edict for the whole-sale massacre of the Sikhs, but Banda "never allowed his struggle to be reduced to a communal strife." Rather 5000 Muslims had gathered around him. Having entered his service, they were free to say their *Azan* and prayer in the army of the Sikhs.<sup>17</sup> The spirit of social harmony continued during the darkest period of Sikh history (1716-1764). This was the period of two holocausts, the Sikhs faced. But during this period the sense of service, saving the women and children from falling into the hands of the invaders, won the Sikhs a great admiration from people of all communities.

Though himself a staunch Sikh, the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh was secular in true sense. All his ministers and generals were appointed on the basis of merit alone-in complete disregard of their religion or caste. Most important of them were Dhian Singh and his brothers, the Dogra Rajputs of Jammu, Fakir Aziz-ud-Din and his Commander of Artillery, Jamadar Khushal Singh, Raja Tej Singh, Raja Sahib Dyal, Raja Rallia Ram, Diwan Ajodhia Prasad, Raja Dina Mall, all Khatris. Even while giving donations the illustrious Maharaja treated Shri Harimandir Sahib, Amritsar, Vishwanath Temple, Benaras and Shahi mosque of Lahore on equal footing. During his reign, Sikh rule was looked upon by the non-Sikhs not as an imposition but as an era of peace in which they enjoyed all manner of civil rights. Captain Murry has given a befitting tribute to the Maharaja in the following words :

Humanity indeed or rather a tenderness for life, was a trait in the character of Ranjit Singh.<sup>18</sup>

The Muslims fought as bravely for the Sikh kingdom during the Anglo-Sikh Wars, 1845-46 and 1848-49 as the Sikhs. One of the most moving laments on the fall of Sikh kingdom is presented by the famous poet Shah Muhammad in his *Var* or ballad.

The second half of 19th century saw the rise of various socio-religious movements in the Punjab. The

Singh Sabha Movement touched the very base, the main springs of the life and resuscitated the essential content of the Sikh belief and exercise. In the early days of reforms, there was not much difference between the Singh Sabha and the Arya Samaj. Both believed in one God, both condemned caste and believed in the equality of man, both were against Brahmanical superstitions and empty rituals etc. It was because both were so close to each other that it was observed that Guru Granth Sahib used to be installed in the Samaj meetings and many prominent Sikhs were found working shoulder to shoulder for the promotion of the Samaj. Bhai Jawahar Singh of Gujranwala was a Vice-President of the Arya Samaj. Bhai Ditt Singh and Bhai Mayya Singh were also its close associates. However due to some misunderstanding that developed between the two bodies, those who joined the Samaj and worked for its promotion seceded from it with the passage of time.

Thus history of Sikhism is history of men and masses. Sikh Gurus gave to the world a message of universal brotherhood and equality of man. This message, the Sikh Guru translated in practice through many institutions set up by them. This not only brought a social amity among people of all walks of life but also a social cataclysm on the Indian scene.

In the present day situation prevailing in the Punjab, one thing that deserves to be noted is the fact that inspite of all the tensions created by some tragedies suffered by the Sikhs in the recent past, the average Sikh has refused to give up his traditional friendship and amity with the non-Sikhs. This is a strange phenomenon which has puzzled many observers from outside. But for the Sikhs it is just a normal behaviour.

Today when casteism, religious bigotry and ritualistic fundamentalism are again unmasking their ugly faces and gravely impairing, the unity, harmony and innervitality of our social fabric, it is imperative to rise to the occasion and

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remind our people of the noble and unique humanitarian heritage that has been bequeathed to us by our sages and illustrious Gurus. The message of universal brotherhood, mutual love and equality between man and man, regardless of caste, creed, race, language, place of birth and nationality as preached by the great Gurus is clear, straight, unambigouous and unequivocal. Indeed the Gurus and their true followers, as the harbingers of modern social thought, preached their gospel of non-sectarian equilitarianism more by example than by precept

First God created light, and then by  
His Omnipotence made all the mortals,  
From the One light has welled up the entire, Universe.  
Then who is good and who is bad?

Let our people fully imbibe the spirit of this message  
in their hearts and souls for their own good, for the good  
of our great nation and for the good of mankind.

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## SIKHS AND THE NATURE

PARKASH SINGH JAMMU

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Man has been dependent upon nature from the very beginning to procure his subsistence and to meet his various other needs. History of man is the story of his increasing control over nature. However, it is now being realized that he has gone a bit too far ahead in exploiting the nature, and if efforts are not made to check this tendency, an ecological imbalance may be created resulting in the decay of human beings as well. The way in which he has been polluting water and air, both necessary for human existence, is causing a serious concern and the extent of noise pollution is also being noted. The concern with the indiscriminate felling of trees has led to some movements and it is felt that if it is not checked, it may lead to soil erosion, causing floods and effect rain fall. Excessive mining of oil, coal, and metals has also attracted the attention of scientists, planners and the state with the result that the search for alternative sources of energy has been accelerated. All these problems pose the question of assessment of man's relations with nature.

Sociologists, social anthropologists and geographers have been concerned with the relationships of man with nature and the branch of learning called social ecology focusses on this question. It is concerned with the ways in which organisms live in their environment (Hawley, 328), population organization, environment and technology (Duncan, *ibid*, 329), and social organization arising from

the interaction of population and environment, which culminate in a system of relationships between differentiated parts, necessitating the study of adaptation of specific items of culture to particular environment. (Steward, *ibid*, 330). Thus social organization and social relationships interact with nature, both shaping and being shaped by it.

Not only the social organization, but even the culture of a group is related to its environment. Thus Steward (1968, 337) noted that cultural ecology is the study of the processes by which a society adapts to its environment. It requires an examination of the interaction of societies and social institutions with one another and with the natural environment. According to him (1968, 341) the culture of any society constitutes a holistic system in which technology, economies, social and political structures, religion, language and other features are closely related. While social ecology notes the effect of environment in shaping social relationships, in cultural ecology role of culture in shaping the environment is highlighted. Thus Steward (*ibid*, 342) noted that culture increasingly creates its own environment, and the effects of nature on society are far less direct and compelling in a complex society than in a simple one. It distinguishes different kinds of socio-cultural systems and institutions and postulates that environmental adaptations depend upon technology, needs and structure of a society. Hawley (*ibid*, 331) also pointed out that the formation of organizations canalizes environmental influences and makes for increasing selectivity of response.

Thus, whereas environment does play a part in shaping the social and cultural systems of a society, the later, which consists of knowledge, beliefs, ways of thinking, the value systems and institutions etc. assumes an increasing role in shaping the environment. Since different societies vary in respect of social and cultural systems, their relations with environment are bound to be



different. This paper therefore aims at finding out (1) the pattern of interaction between the Sikhs and nature, and (2) to see if and how it is related to their religious conceptions about nature.

The generalizations about the pattern of interaction between Sikhs and nature are drawn from their activities and population movements right from the Sikh Gurus up till recent times, while conclusions about their conceptions about nature are based on the utterances of the Sikh Gurus, and the deductions drawn from these by the scholars who focussed their attention on this subject.

**Sikhs Create a New Equilibrium in Nature :** An analysis of the behaviour patterns of the Sikhs vis a vis nature may be started with the perusal of the activities of the Sikh Grurus. Seen thus it is found that Nanak, the first Guru, was born in a village, spent his childhood in the lap of nature, lived in a small town, was one of the most travelled men of his times who ultimately founded and developed village Kartarpur on the bank of the river Ravi, and settled as an agriculturist. The third Guru, Amar Dass settled at the developed Goindwal on the bank of river Beas built several structures along with a *bauli*, and converted it into a place from which foodgrains were exported through boats down the river. The fourth Guru, Ram Dass purchased, a piece of forest land, converted a small pond there into a big tank, built one of the most sacred shrines for the Sikhs around which a city was developed which gradually became one of the biggest trading centres in northern India. Guru Arjun developed a bigger tank a few miles away at Tarn Tarn and built a shrine and township there. Guru Hargobind built Akal Takht and developed Kiratput in Shiwalik foot hills, while Guru Gobind Singh built a fortress, a *bauli* and several structures on a place, supposed to be haunted by some evil spirits, and gave it the name Anandpur. The founding and development of villages and towns, the digging of the tanks, the construction of fortresses and other structures

requires the organization of human and material resources and skills, an orientation to modify nature and all these are manifest in the activities of the Gurus. Mention should be made here of the institution of *kar seva*, free contribution of labour and resources for digging and cleaning the tanks and constructing various buildings, that has helped Sikhs to build and maintain their shrines.

An idea of the way the Sikhs interact with nature, modify it and in the process create a new equilibrium with it can be had from the movement of Sikh population during the last hundred years. The first of these took place over a hundred years ago, when the British government decided to colonize arid areas, now in Pakistan. It was just the recognition on their part of the ability of the Sikhs to combat with and transform nature for its better use, that they decided to sell lands primarily to the Sikhs, in the canal colonies in Gujranwala, Shaikhupura, Layallpur, Sargodha and Montgomery etc. Water table in these areas was very low, climate was extremely hot in summer and cold in winter, rain fall was low and dust storms were very common. Trees of *Jand*, *kikkar*, indigenous *ber* and thorny *Karir* shrubs, and *ban* formed the major constituents of flora, while rabbits, pigs, jackals, wolves, buffaloes, cows, oxen, camels were the major species of fauna. Population was sparse and the economy was primarily pastoral. The new settlers, who called local people *janglies*, radically transformed the area. The latest and hybrid varieties of wheat, cotton, sugarcane, chillies, fodders, mustard and grams etc were raised and agriculturally it was considered to be the most developed area in India. The old species of trees were replaced by shisham, *pipal*, mulbary, guava, mango, jamun, nashpati and various forms of citrous and even eucalyptus trees. Wolves and jakals etc. were eliminated and improved breeds of oxen, cows, buffaloes, horses, mares, ponies and camels were developed. Land was levelled and reserves of timber wood and orchards were developed which reduced

the intensity of storms also.

Increase in agricultural production and in state income through high revenue rates motivated the Maharaja of Bikaner, to dig a canal from the Sutlej river to irrigate his land and he also decided to settle Sikhs in the canal fed area of Ganganagar in twenties and thirties of this century. The land here was uneven which was frequented by sand dunes, and high velocity storms were a regular feature. Only small thorny bushes like *ber* and *karir* and the trees of *jand* and *kikkar* grew besides small thorny bushes which served the camels and deer as fodder. Fauna consisted of herds of deer, some milch cattle in settlements besides *sahna*, a rodent, from which the local people extracted oil and consumed the rest. Within a time span of four decades this became the most productive area of Rajasthan that competes well with Panjab. The latest varieties of wheat, cotton, maize, even paddy and fodder are grown now. Orchards of citrus trees like kinnow, orange, mosambies, malta, and lemon grapes, guave, mango and jamun, besides eucalyptus, shisham and other varieties of timber wood have replaced thorny shrubs. Sand dunes have been levelled and intensity of storms has decreased. Improved and even exotic varieties of animals like camels, cows, buffaloes, horses and poultry have replaced wild animals and rodents.

After partition the Sikhs moved in numbers to the princely states of Panjab, and to Sirsa, Hissar, Karnal and Kurukshetra districts now in Haryana. In fifties they started moving to Uttar Pradesh, particularly Tarai region, and this process was accelerated in the sixties. The story has been the same everywhere with minor local variations and need not be repeated time and again. First, wherever they went they purchased land in lumpsum, or in instalments or they leased it in. Then they cleared it of natural vegetation and eliminated wild animals beasts and rodents. Thirdly, they arranged for irrigation or made use

of it when provided by the state. Fourthly, they used latest technology and scientific know how for raising intensive crops. Fifthly they levelled land and enriched it by the use of manures, fertilizers and leguminous crops. Sixthly they planted more useful varieties of timber and fruit trees. And lastly, they raised improved and exotic varieties of useful animals. Wherever they went they made a better use of nature. They modified it and created a better equilibrium between man and nature. They gave the nature more than they got from it. Their example shows the process of eco-generation.

Evidently, their behaviour and relationships with nature are distinctly different from many other people here. Now the question is how to explain it? An enquiry into this question is important to lay bare the way in which the conceptions, the ideas, beliefs, practices and institutionalized behaviour patterns of a people, particularly those sanctified by religion, may modify the forces of nature and lead to eco-generation and create a new equilibrium between man and nature.

**Sikh View of Nature :** Sikh view of nature can be seen in contrast to the way the Hindu notions about it. Kapur Singh (1975, 45-56) who examined the question on the basis of scriptural evidence from the two religions came to the conclusion that Guru Nanak abandoned the term *prakriti*, which has a permanent odour of absoluteness and existence in its own right. In *samkhya*, the world is comprehended in the terms of *purusa*, but does not originate from it and is not grounded in it. According to him (ibid 48) *samkhya* philosophy, the fundamental categories recognize no consciousness, or absolute or a creator god. It does not deny the existence of gods or even a God.....The God, or gods indeed may exist, but they can be no more than products of interaction of unconscious *mulprakriti* and the conscious *purusa* and the unconscious *gunas*. Even the vedic *pursua* is not the creator or controller of the world, but just the neutral stuff of the manifest and

the unmanifest worlds not fundamentally and essentially different from the *purusa* of the *Samkhya*.

Thus though the *samkhya* and the Vedic philosophy does conceive a *purusa*, or God, or gods, these gods are not the creators or controllers of the world and the nature. This conception of *purusa* is in tune with the relationships of man with nature as they manifest in popular Hinduism in which naturistic tendencies hold a central position. In popular Hinduism the nature is taken as having qualities of life, the spirit, and become object of worship. The sun, the moon, the stars are taken as *devtas* that influence the life chances of an individual and become objects of worship. The earth, the peaks of the mountains, the water springs, the streams and the rivers are also taken as holy and purifying objects of worship. Some forms of nature—the rain, water, fire, air and even dust storms become the objects of veneration. Many of the trees like pipal, *bohar*, *neem*, *tulsi* and even *jand* are taken as sacred. Among the animals the cow is sacred and snake is also worshipped in the forms of *Gugga*. Certain diseases like chicken pox, small pox and malarial are also thought to be caused by some spirits. Thus in Hindu philosophy nature becomes object of worship, which is not to be modified and changed.

Sikh approach to understanding nature show a marked contrast to this. Guru Nanak instead of using the term *prakriti*, used the Arabic word Qudrat to denote nature (Kapur Singh, *ibid*, 52) which means 'under the authority of its master' and in Persian it means 'power, potency, authority of God, the creation, universe, nature' (*Ibid*, 53). In Islamic lore, while nature is called Qudrat, the creator of nature and man is called Al-Qader and Al Khaliq. (*ibid*, 52) Guru Nanak employs the term Qudrat to designate nature and Cosmos, in the sense of the general cosmic order ordained by God. It is the complex of created things in contradiction to the Creator, (*ibid*, 53). Guru Nanak revealed that the world has a Creator, that as created Nature, it has no absolute basis or essence

independently and apart from the *purusa*, and last that the relations between the creator and the created nature is not a separate and independent category of existence, but is merely an extension, an emanation from this *purusa* (ibid, 53).

Harpal Singh (1981) who conducted an exhaustive study of the concept of nature in Sikhism on the basis of scriptural evidence concluded that nature is subservient to God; that it can change forms. But cannot be destroyed; that it is real, while man is both real and conscious; that nature has been created by God, that the Creator, nature and living forms are inseparable; that man is a bridge between God and nature and that man can grasp the secrets of nature by the grace of the God. Wazir Singh (1967, 62) also observed that man in fact is the link between the God and nature. God conveys his commands to the world through man. Trilochan Singh (1969, 26) concluded that in Sikhism nature provides an arena to the man to fight.

The above views about nature can also be substantiated from the writings of Guru Nanak and other Gurus and interpreters of Sikhism writing about the state of things before the creation of the universe. Nanak (Maru, 1, 1035-6) states : for millions of years it was just the mist; there was neither earth nor sky, neither day nor night, neither sun nor moon, neither water nor air, neither eating nor speaking, neither birth nor death, neither streams nor ocean.....Only He was there.

And about the creation it is stated : He created the sun, the moon and the light and the creation of day and night was also His game. He created water, fire and air and from these He created the world. (*Malhar*, 1, 1279). Creation and devastation are caused by His words. (*Parbhati*, 1, 1345). Everything has been made by Him, He does and establishes everything. (*Magh*, 3, 117). The True one created air, from air water came into existence and from water He created everything (*Magh*, 5, 131). First He

created Himself and in the second place he created Nature. (*Sri*, 1, 19).

Secondary position of nature in Sikhism is also clear from Guru Nanak's/observations on *arti* (*Dhanasari*, 1, 663) where sky, sun, moon, stars and all the vegetation are described as performing His *arti*. Kabir also stated that even if seven seas are turned into ink, all the vegetation is shaped as pen and the whole of the earth is used as a sheet to write, on, His proper appreciation is not possible.

Guru Arjan (*Asa*, 5, 120) writes that a Sikh is not afraid of the evil effects of natural events. Gurus Name is powerful enough to protect one from the evil influences of the *Grahas*, (*Gauri*, 5, 155). The name of the almighty is the protection against evil effects of the hundreds of *grahas* : An interpreter of Sikh lore Bhai Gurdas (var 1) wrote that the Sikhs do not consult astrologers, Vedas, or auspicious dates and days of the week, nor do they bother about the effects of the *grahas*. He states that the worship of sun, moon, earth, sky, air, water, fire and Dharam Raj is a false religion.

The above way of comprehending the forces of nature led to the creation of new institutions. *Sangat*, the collective thinking and decision making group; *sewa*, and particularly *kar sewa* the voluntary contribution of labour and resources for a collective cause, were the forms of the institutionalized activities of the Sikh with which they build tanks and shrines and maintained these.

**Summary, Conclusions and Implications :** This paper is the result of the concern expressed by the state and planners about excessive exploitation of nature by man, and with finding out the ways to check it. While evaluating the findings of the ecologist it has been concluded here that whereas social ecologist emphasize the role of the environment and forces of nature in shaping social system, cultural ecologists point out to the way the cultural factors help the man in reshaping the

nature and creation of the environment by man. In this process ecologist assumes that men tend to keep an equilibrium with nature (Hawely, *ibid*, 33).

On the basis of empirical evidence about the patterns of interaction between Sikhs and nature, it has been found that wherever they settled first in areas of Punjab now in Pakistan, then in Rajasthan, then in princely states of Punjab and some districts of Haryana and last in Terai regions of Uttar Pradesh, they destroyed less useful and harmful species of both flora and fauna, and at all these places developed more useful developed and hybrid varieties of these by using technology and latest scientific know how. They did create a new equilibrium with nature and instead of polluting it regenerated its improved version.

These type of relationship of Sikhs with nature are attributed to the Sikh way of conceptualizing the nature, their beliefs and values and their institutionalized practices. It is concluded that the Sikhs do not worship nature because in the system of priorities in Sikh philosophy God, the creator, comes first, which is followed by man who is a conscious form of material, while nature comes last. Man can comprehend the mysteries of nature by the grace of the Guru and protect himself from its wrath. Sikh institutions of *Sangat*, *Sewa* and particularly *Kar sewa* wich patterned the activities of Sikhs vis-a-vis nature went a long way in shaping their activities of ecogeneration.

The relationship of man with nature are related to the economic system in which he is operating. In a hunting food gathering economy he is likely to worship it, in an agricultural economy, he starts modifying it while in a developing capitalist economy, the economic elite in collahoration with the political elite may overexploit it. If a society does not contain the forces of exploiting the nature, and it does not generate value system, technology and institutionalized behaviour patterns aiming at



ecogeneration it is likely to destroy its economy and may be polity and itself. While this realization of the over exploitation of nature is there in India, a lot of effort is required to be put in to generate a better value system and institutionalized activity to attain tangible results.

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## INITIAL SIKH COINAGE

(LT. COL.) SURINDER SINGH (RETD.)

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The Sikh coinage has been erroneously treated by the numismatists as merely one of the numerous native states currencies, which came into existence with the downfall of the Mughal empire<sup>1</sup>. Whereas some native states currencies continued till Indian independence in 1947<sup>2</sup>, the Sikh coinage went out of circulation with the annexation of Lahore Darbar, the Sikh State in 1849, falling prey to the British imperialism<sup>3</sup>. Sikh coins have some very fascinating and unique features depicting their concept of sovereignty, but the study of Sikh coins has remained a virtually neglected subject by numismatists till recent times.<sup>4</sup>

Contemporary historians and news-writers have mentioned the striking of Sikh coins with the establishment of the first Sikh State after the fall of Sirhind in 1710 A. D. to the Sikh forces under the leadership of Banda Bahadur, the commander of the Khalsa army, so chosen by the tenth master, Guru Gobind Singh shortly before his demise at Nander (Deccan) in 1708<sup>5</sup> A.D. For a long time these historical accounts either remained unnoticed or were not given credibility by numismatists, presumably on account of non-availability of any such coins. But from 1967<sup>6</sup> and onwards a couple of such coins have been located and it appears reasonable and logical that initial Sikh coinage was struck during 1710-12 A.D. with the formation of the Sikh State over the province of Sirhind and surrounding territories under Sikh occupation.

Before we take up the numismatic investigation which

commenced from 1967 A.D. we may examine the historical backdrop, which commenced simultaneously with the striking of these coins. The first account of Sikh coins occur in the news writers' account of Jan. 1710 AD in "Akhbar-i-Darbar-i-Mualla".

"The Khalsa Sikhs have strange practices amongst themselves. They call one person as an Army. In their despatches, they write, that an army of Sikhs have arrived. Some say they have struck coins and in their '*hukamnamas*', the year '*Ahad*' is written. In the villages the produce is divided between them and the tillers of the land, two parts to the tiller and one part to them. The land has been given to the tiller. They want all this be made known to the King, Elephants, cash and grain of Wazir Khan of Sirhind has fallen in their hands in large quantities. They have made their own '*mohar*' seal.

*Azmat-i-Nanak Guru ham zahir o ham ghaib ast*

*Badshah din o duniya aap Sachcha Sahib ast.*

meaning that the greatness of Guru Nanak is both patent and latent and the true lord himself is the Kind of both the spiritual and temporal worlds.

"There is a great cry amongst the people. They are astonished at the decree of God". The word '*ghaib*' is a distortion of the correct word '*Latin*' meaning inner and the same is given in the news letter dated 6th July 1710<sup>8</sup>. This is corroborated by the recording of the same couplet by another contemporary historian in *Hadiquat-i-aqalim*<sup>9</sup>. The use of this legend on the state seal is not authenticated by the availability of its imprint on any state document. These reports clearly bring out the abolition of the existing feudal society and its replacement by land holding peasants free from feudal domination as preached by the Sikh Gurus. The seal impressions that have been located are of :

*Deg Tegh Fateh Nusrat baidarang,*

*Yaft Uz Nanak Guru Gobind Singh.*

meaning the kettle to feed, sword to defend and spontaneous victory (fateh and nusrat have the same meaning) received

from Guru Gobind Singh. This legend appears as a seal imprint on *hukhamnamas* issued by Banda Bahadur e. g. one dated 12th Dec. 1710 to the 'Sangat' at Jaunpur and another (undated) to Bhai Dharam Singh<sup>10</sup>. Half a century later, this legend has been profusely used by Sikhs on their coins struck regularly from Lahore, Amritsar, Multan Kashmir etc<sup>11</sup>.

William Irvine in "Later Mughals" edited and published by J. N. Sarkar in 1922 has given an account of Sikhs. He states that "At Lohgarh Banda Bahadur tried to assume something of a regal state. He was 'Sacha Padshah', the veritable sovereign,—coin was struck in the new sovereign's name." It bore the legend as under :-

Obverse Sikkah Zad bar har do alam, Tegh Nanak Wahib ast,  
Fateh Gobind Shah-i-Shahan, fazal Sachcha Sahib ast.  
Reverse Zarb aman-al-dahar, masavarat shahr zinat altakht  
mubarak bakht.

meaning "Fateh Gobind, King of Kings, struck coin in the two worlds, the sword of Nanak is the granter of desires, by grace of God he is the veritable lord. Coined at refuge of the world, the walled city ornament of the fortunate throne"<sup>12</sup>.

William Irvine is wrong in stating that the coin was struck in the new sovereign's name as the coin has been obviously in the name of Gurus and not Banda Bahadur.

William Irvine is known for his giving copious references from manuscripts etc, of which he had a very large collection, for the authenticity of the factual position of his accounts. There are, however, no footnotes etc. giving the primary or contemporary accounts from which William Irvine took the above legends. 'Later Mughals' could not be completed by William Irvine, due to his ill-health and the same was given by Jadu Nath Sarkar for editing and completion. Admittedly Jadu Nath Sarkar is stated to have carried out severe compression of the copious footnotes<sup>13</sup> and the references, if any, about the said legends may have got pruned under editor's knife and the opportunity to compare the recorded legends with imprinted legends on coins became non existent, especially when there are certain

discrepancies between the two. Fortunately, William Irvine had got some earlier completed portions of 'Later Mughals' published in various Journals etc. The portion pertaining to the striking of the Sikh coins stands reproduced in Asiatic Society of Bengal 1894<sup>14</sup> wherein also no footnote regarding these coins exists. William Irvine, however, appears to have taken the material on coins from an "anonymous fragment" of a manuscript folio No. 141 (his own collection). This seemed to be a part of the Mohammad Ihsan Ijad's manuscript of which another fragment is in British Museum Library OR 25. Ijad's manuscript not being available in the important centres in India, a request was made to a friend in London to locate the same with British Museum. The curator of Persian section has reported that a careful checking of folios No. 14 to 16 of Ijad's manuscript with them does not reveal any mention of Sikh coins<sup>15</sup>. The library in which William Irvine's manuscript has gone will require a long search in Britain.

Almost the entire portion on Sikhs given in 'Later Mughals' Chapter I Sec. 16 to Sec. 21 (pp 79 to 121) Chapter II Sec. 19 to (pp. 307 to 320) stand published by William Irvine in J. Asiatic Society of Bengal No. 3 (1984) pp 112 to 143 under the heading 'Guru Gobind Singh and Banda' and the two accounts are absolutely ditto copies without any editing done by J. N. Sarkar.

Hence the remarks made by J. N. Sarkar that "if he had not used his discretion in writing much of what Irvine had written against the Sikh community, he would have been by that time become a martyr"<sup>16</sup>, are a distortion of facts and totally unwarranted. Such like construction against the Sikhs and Irvine takes away much of the stature of J. N. Sarkar as a unbiased historian. When later historians viz Indu Bhushan Banerjee and Anil Chander Bannerjee analysed in detail the bias of Sarkar against the Sikhs in their works, Sarkar chose to remain silent which further establishes his bias against the Sikhs.

Around this period, Karam Singh a not very well placed

scholar and under the employment of Patiala State wrote a couple of books on Banda Bahadur. He was a very conscientious scholar well-conversant with Persian language. He wrote his first book on Banda Bahadur in 1907<sup>17</sup> in which there is no mention of coins having been struck by Sikhs nor there is any reference to Farrukh Siyar-nama by Ihsan Ijad in the bibliographical notes. In his second book "*Banda Kaun se*" (which is undated) he has mentioned in detail about Shahnama by Ihsan Ijad and the special features of his work in his bibliographical notes<sup>18</sup>. Based on Ijad's authority he had recorded the striking of coins by Banda Bahadur and the obverse legend thereon (no specific page has been mentioned for the same). Ijad was a court chronicler who wrote Shahnama under the orders of Farrukh siyar in 1131 Hijri i. e. 1715 AD. Some of his accounts of Banda Bahadur written by Ijad are not available in any other Persian manuscript<sup>19</sup>. Karam Singh has also given a second reference "*Hadiqat-ul-Aqalim*" for these Sikh coins<sup>20</sup>. This part of Karam Singh's statement is incorrect as the legend mentioned therein is a different one. Both writers were contemporaries but never seen to have met or exchanged views. I have been able to locate the complete manuscript of Ihsan Ijad from Muslim University, Aligarh and unfortunately that manuscript also does not make any mention of coins. The legend mentioned by Karam Singh is exactly the same as mentioned by William Irvine, establishes the impression that both these scholars took the above legends from some account of Ihsan Ijad.

Ganda Singh another biographer of Banda Bahadur wrote a book on his life in 1935. Ganda Singh states that Banda Bahadur struck a coin in the name of his saviours Guru Nanak and Gobind Singh. The legends mentioned by Ganda Singh is the same as that of William Irvine except that he has inserted the word 'Singh' after Gobind<sup>21</sup>. Ganda Singh has made a slightly different rendering of the Persian legends in English. In fact he has changed his rendering in his next writing on Banda Bahadur. However, the Roman

English rendering of the legends is exactly the same as done by William Irvine and some minor mistakes committed by him, are repeated by Ganda Singh viz the word 'al' between 'aman and 'dahar' and before 'takht' has been written as 'ud'. Ganda Singh has profusely quoted Persian extracts and references but has not given any source reference on the coin and its legends. Ganda Singh wrote another booklet on Banda Bahadur in 1976 in which also he has mentioned the coin and its legends as in the earlier book, but this time he has given two references in his footnotes viz. Ijads' Farrukh Siyar nama and Hadiqat-ul-Aqalim p. 148<sup>22</sup>. He has not given the page No. of Ijads' work nor its location.

Hadiqat-ul-Aqalim is available in Muslim University Aligarh besides other places and at page 148 thereof, it is recorded that the successors of the sect of Nanak Shah have struck a coin in their own name with the legend exactly as mentioned in *Akhbar-i-Darbar-i-Mualla*<sup>23</sup> and not the one recorded by Ganda Singh and thus is an incorrect reference. Similar mistake has been made by Karam Singh and it is quite likely that Ganda Singh took the same from Karam Singh's account. The author had contacted Ganda Singh thrice at his Patiala residence in 1982-83 to inquire about the source reference for the said legends but he could not give any specific reference for the same. Ganda Singh has written another long article "Banda Singh Bahadur, his achievements and the place of his execution"<sup>24</sup>, in which he has given the same legends and the same incomplete and incorrect references as the case of his earlier booklet.

Hari Ram Gupta, in his *History of the Sikhs*, Vol. II from 1708 to 1769 written in 1937, has simply stated that Banda Bahadur struck coins and issued orders under his own seal,<sup>25</sup> without giving any source reference for the same, although he has otherwise been as meticulous as William Irvine in giving references and footnotes. Khushwant Singh in his book *A History of the Sikhs* has recorded, "Thus Banda, the bairagi-hermit who as a military commander had become Banda Bahadur—the brave, assumed his third incarnation

as Banda Padshah, the emperor. He introduced a new calender year dating from his capture of Sirhind. He had also new coins struck to mark his reign bearing the names of Guru Nanak and Gobind"<sup>26</sup>. The legends mentioned in footnotes are those mentioned by Ganda Singh, without giving his source reference or acknowledging Ganda Singh's account.

G. S. Deol, a fairly recent biographer of Banda Bahadur has mentioned about the coins and its legends, acknowledging the same having taken from Ganda Singh's account.<sup>27</sup> Giani Gian Singh in his book *Guru Khalsa* has given a fairly detailed account of Banda Bahadur but there is no mention about the coin or its legends<sup>28</sup>.

Khushwaqt Rai, a Persian Chronicler and an official news writer of the East India Company, wrote "*Tawarikh-i-Sikhan*" in 1811 AD. He has stated Guru Gobind Singh issued a coin with the legend "*Deg Tegh Fateh Nusrat Baidrang Yaft Uz Nanak Guru Gobind Singh*", without giving any source reference.<sup>29</sup> Somewhat similarly Sayed Mohammad Lalif in his '*History of Punjab*' has stated that Guru Gobind Singh had a personal seal with the above legend which the pujaris used to affix on his *hukamnamas*<sup>30</sup>. There is ample indication in the '*Zafarnama*'<sup>31</sup> written by Guru Gobind Singh to Emperor Aurangzeb, that he had not adopted such like symbols of territorial sovereignty and Khushwant Rai and Mohd. Latif have been having flights of their imagination.

J. S. Grewal, the present leading historian of the Sikhs has written in his book "*The Sikhs of the Punjab*", in the series "*New Cambridge History of India*" that "He (Banda Bahadur) adopted Mukhlispur, an imperial fort now given the name of 'Lohgarh' as his capital and struck a new coin in the name of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh. With a similar inscription he started using a seal on his orders (*Hukamnamas*). Whereas J. S. Grewal has given a reference of Ganda Singh about the seal on the *Hukamnamas*. He has not given any reference/footnote as what was the legend on the Sikh coin, nor has he given any contemporary



historical evidence in support of his assertions. He has thus not given any information on the initial Sikh coinage, rather added to the disinformation.

From the above accounts, the picture that emerges is that the legends on the coins struck by Banda Bahadur was apparently recorded by Ishan Ijad in his manuscript which appears to have been scrutinized by William Irvine and Karam Singh. Karam Singh carried out most of his research in Lahore libraries and hence Ijad's manuscript is likely to be available in some library in Lahore. The author has not been able to secure any access there so far. The manuscript examined by William Irvine was his own copy and to which library it has been donated required search in British libraries which the author is not in a position to carry out. Ganda Singh seems to have taken the account of legends from William Irvine's and Karam Singh's works without acknowledging them and does not appear to have examined any original source reference.

All this examination of the initial Sikh coinage has been carried out by historians without any examination of actual coins and hence has been based on hearsay and imagination as no author seems to have actually examined the coins and thereafter recorded about them.

Repeated reading of the Ihsan Ijads' Farrukhsiyar name goes the feeling that description of the coins has been given in some other volume of Ishan Ijad or some other chronicler as the available volume i. e. British museum and photocopy with Aligarh University virtually closes before the Sikh period and hence is not the requisite document.

Since about half a century after the fall of the initial Sikh state the same arose again in 1765 A. D. and the legends used/adopted in the coins was the one on the seal and a few years later the one on the coin. Hence, circumstantially one can believe with reasonable amount of certainty about the Sikh coins struck during 1710-13.

Numismatic investigation of Sikh coins started with C. J. Rodgers in the second half of nineteenth century, when he

made a collection of Sikh coins and wrote the first article on Sikh coins in 1881<sup>32</sup>. He seems to have been unaware of historical accounts of Banda Bahadur's coins nor any actual coin. He after making mention of the elusive coin struck in the name of Jassa Singh Ahluwalia comes to the coin of 1765 A. D. i. e. Sambat 1822 from Lahore with the legend appearing in Banda Bahadur's seal. This coin is readily available in various museums and even with private collectors. C. J. Rodger's understanding of Sikh ethos and aspirations has been very superficial and quite a few of his assertions on Sikh coinage have been incorrect<sup>33</sup>. J. D. Cunningham, and N. K. Sinha share Rodgers assessment with slight variations<sup>34</sup>.

Col. Charles Panish came across a silver rupee coin which was coming fairly true to the coin legends mentioned by William Irvine. Although there were certain minor variations, Panish was inclined to consider it to be the legendary issue of Banda Bahadur. He brought the same to the notice of the numismatic world, through an article thereon in 1967<sup>35</sup>. Over a decade later John Deyell a numismatist of international repute and an official in Canadian High Commission in India came across a somewhat similar coin and wrote an elaborate article on various aspects of his and Panish's coin in 1980.<sup>36</sup>

John Deyell's numismatic investigation done in detail and with great care forms a pioneering work on the initial Sikh coinage. He has contended that the reciting of the legends on the obverse and reverse of the said coin fairly accurately by various historians, intrigued him and led him to trace a long chain of secondary references back to what appeared to be the source of the testimony of Bandas' coinage, which is a manuscript *Tazkirat-i-Salat-in-i-Chughtaiya* by Mohammad Hadi Kanwar Khan. He was further contended that Kanwar Khan was personally present at the first siege of Lohgarh in 1710 and it was at that time the coin was first witnessed presumably by Kanwar Khan himself<sup>37</sup>. While comparing his coin with that of Panish, he has stated

that delving into the literature, it soon became apparent that his coin was the very issue recorded by Kanwar Khan and his coin fully corroborates the testimony of Kanwar Khan<sup>38</sup>. These remarks of John Deyell are totally incorrect and absolutely frivolous as explained in succeeding paragraphs. In fact the entire basis of his arguments and their justification put forth by John Deyell rested on Kanwar Khan's account which he had located but didn't seem to have examined himself. Numismatic investigations are part-science and hence correct and detailed examination of primary references are absolutely essential and any dependence on presumptions or secondary information can lead to greivous errors and misinterpretations as has happened in John Deyell's case study.

The author having already been sufficiently baffled over the non-availability of Ijad's account made efforts to examine Kanwar Khan's account. Kanwar Khan was a Hindu convert named Chandidas, who was neither commissioned by the emperor nor sponsored by any noble and was writing on his own. Although he has been an eye-witness to most of the events that took place during the period of his record, his work is almost entirely based on information received from daily court records abstracts etc and *Tazkirat-i-Salalin-i-Chughtaiya* is one of the three books he had written during his stay in Delhi<sup>39</sup>. There are more than fifteen manuscripts present in different libraries of the world, nine of which have been consulted by Muzaffar Alam who has prepared an edited version there of with an introduction<sup>40</sup>. Besides examining Muzaffar Alam's work, the manuscript with Muslim University Aligarh and Khalsa College, Amritsar have been examined. It is observed therefrom that there is no mention of the Sikh coin and its legends in these manuscripts. Hence the numismatic investigations carried out by John Deyell turn out to be a purposeless pursuit. The bane of the study of Sikh coins by historians has been that they have been tempted to comment on Sikh coins due to their uniqueness, but without ever having examined the

coins thereby arriving at incorrect conclusions and thus repeatedly spreading misinformation. Numismatists have also succumbed to accepting such misinformation or without examining available primary references and thereby they are also arriving at incorrect inferences. It appears rather strange that John Deyell chose to base his entire thesis on a reference which he couldn't consult, although it was readily available.

John Deyell being a numismatist of international repute, has done more damage than good to the study of initial Sikh coinage, by his quoting wrong references and later historians/numismatists are quoting John Deyell's assertions even without acknowledging him for the same and thus spreading misinformation.

Parmeshwari Lal Gupta, Director Indian Institute of Research in Numismatic Studies, has prepared a catalogue of Sikh coins with Sheesh Mahal Museum at Patiala. He has recorded in the descriptive portion that, "for long coins, issued by Banda Bahadur had not come to light. Mohammad Hadi Kamwar Khan the author of *Tazkirat-us-Salatin-i-Chughtaiya* was the only source of information. He had seen the coins and had mentioned them in his work and had quoted their inscriptions. From him, the information about the coins was borrowed by all the subsequent writers of Sikh history. Only recently two coins collectors Charles K. Panish and John S. Deyell, discovered this coinage and substantiated the authenticity of Kamwar Khan's words".<sup>41</sup> Since the author had not been able to locate any specific contemporary reference as well as from *Tazkarat-i-Salalin-i-Chughtaiya*, Parmashwari Lal Gupta was requested to specify the exact part of Kamwar Khan's work dealing with Sikh coin and its location. Since it was also mentioned in the bibliography I was rather surprised at the reply received from Parmeshwari Lal Gupta that "as regards the Persian sources, I must frankly admit that I do not know Persian; and having full faith in those scholars who mentioned them, I have used their material"<sup>42</sup>. He has, however, not

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acknowledged the same in his book.

Hans Herrli has prepared a very extensive catalogue of Sikh coins with drawings, a revised version of his earlier work in 1986. The author was favoured with a copy of the manuscript for suggestions etc. It has covered almost the entire panorama of Sikh coins with over four hundred drawings and elaboration of legends etc. and his book will be a definite contribution in recognition and collection of Sikh coins. But his descriptive portions are at places quite incorrect and his understanding of the Sikh ethos and aspirations very inadequate. While giving details of John Deyells; and Panish's coins, he has recorded "The manuscript of Kanwar Khan's account has not been seen by scholars in recent years and not much is known about its report on the subject of Banda's coinage. I think the rupees were not struck by Banda but around 1734 A. D. by Nawab Kapur Singh or even still later in 1765-66 A. D. as a reaction of the Sarbat Khalsa to Jassa Singh Ahluwalia's rupee. In this case the era used to date the Khalsa rupees could well be connected with Sirhind, but with the occupation of Sirhind and destruction of the town in December 1763 and not with the sack of 1710 A. D.<sup>43</sup> Hans Herrli comments on Kanwar Khan's account and the coins struck under Banda Bahadur are more fanciful than objective thinking and without any historical basis or any analytical numismatic investigation.

Ken Wiggins and Stan Goron have written a number of articles on Sikh coins in the news-letter of "Oriental Numismatic Society, Surrey, United Kingdom" during 1981 to 1985. They have based their examination on the foundations laid in C. D. Rodgers work and hence have repeated the same mistakes. They have catalogued and explained the coins of Banda Bahadur and further Sikh coinage without delving into their historic background and hence their account, although of an elementary nature forms a correct account of Sikh coinage<sup>44</sup>, although incomplete and unauthenticated at many places. It is rather disappointing that whereas extensive research has been carried out by

Indian scholars on ancient, medieval and even modern Indian coinage and various universities in India have included numismatic studies in their curriculum but their has been virtually no work done on Sikh coins which have some very original and unique features. The exposure of the Sikh coin struck by Banda Bahadur made by Charles Panish in 1967 to the numismatic world has not been picked up by any Indian scholar so far and none of three initial coins located so far are retained in the country of their origin.

Before we take up further consideration of John Deyell's assessment, an understanding of certain historical facts and the prevalent Sikhs ethos and aspirations becomes very necessary and essential for a proper understanding. Sikhism has been a way of life shown to the society by the ten divine masters Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh. Besides the worship of one God, they taught love, service and sacrifice for fellowbeings. They advocated the living of mundane life of a householder with moral values, earning ones bread with the sweat of his brow and sharing it with others. The caste barriers were broken through the institutions of *sangat* and *langar*. The women were given respect and equality. Asceticism, renunciation, and blind ritualism were all discarded and a self-reliant society was formed for which their personal lives were living examples of spiritual living. By early seventeenth century, they had developed their doctrine in the Granth, a place of central assembly and pilgrimage in Amritsar, sufficient finances through the institution of *Daswadh* and it was deemed to be a state within the Mughal state. The Mughal rulers could not appreciate the emergence of a self-reliant and self assertive society in the midst of the oppressed and depressed Hindu populace. Their oppressive measures to thwart its further growth resulting in a series of martyrdoms especially Guru Arjan Dev's execution by Jahangir<sup>45</sup> which led to resistance and further cohesion and stelling of Sikh community. Sikhs took to arms for their self defence and the process of continued

suppression and resistance led to the formation of Khalsa, the '*sant sipahis*' of Guru Gobind Singh with their headquarters at Anandpur. The combined strength of the Hindu hill rajas and Mughal forces dislodged the Sikhs from Anandpur in 1704 with great loss of men and material including all the four sons of Guru Gobind Singh. But the spirit infused in the Sikhs was not subdued or broken and was only temporarily made dormant. Shortly, before his demise Guru Gobind Singh, finding the Sikh society strong enough to stand on his own, abolished the personal guruship and invested his spiritual sovereignty in the holy book named Guru Granth Sahib and the temporal sovereignty in the Khalsa community. Since then, Sikhs sought their spiritual guidance from the hymns of their Gurus in the holy Granth and held the temporal sovereignty as a sacred trust bequeathed to them by their Gurus. Such was the democratic spirit that even after over a century, the mighty Ranjit Singh held the reigns of the Sikh State as a servant of the Gurus<sup>46</sup>. The Sikhs treat their ten gurus as an entity and there is a total continuity in their teachings.<sup>47</sup>

Guru Gobind Singh shortly before his demise in Nander (Deccan) in Oct. 1708, selected Banda Bahadur, a bairagi who had become his ardent disciple to lead the Sikh forces in resistance to the Mughal oppression in Panjab and sent him with a few trusted followers and his letters of authority. Such was the spirit of the Khalsa and the foresight of their commander that in less than a year of their entry in northern India, Sikhs under Banda Bahadur converted their struggle into a people's movement and captured Sirhind province alongwith the surrounding territories<sup>48</sup>.

Banda Bahadur took various administrative measures viz established Sikh 'Thanas' at various important towns, created sub divisions and placed them under charge of Sikh Sardars, abolished the much abused zamindari system, peasants were made proprietors of land, a new era<sup>49</sup> was commenced with the fall of Sirhind and the Sikh State given the trapping of territorial sovereignty in the form of striking

of Sikh coins and having a Sikh seal for state orders. Sirhind the largest town was considered too accursed by Sikhs and was treated only as a base depot for its supplies<sup>50</sup>. Sadhaura fort was strengthened with an extra wall and a moat and Lohgarh fortress about ten miles distant (the entire area covered with water streams & forests) was also strengthened. Lohgarh is located at a straight mountain cliff about 700 ft high from the ground, is on the border of thick extensive jungle area (which even after three centuries is a reserved forest with virtually no habitation). Banda Bahadur successfully used Lohgarh as a tactical retreat or rear guard action stage, when his forces could not withhold the onslaught of Mughal armies at Sadhura. When the combined Mughal forces alongwith Rajputs and jats heavily outnumbered his forces and further fighting was suicidal, he would suddenly withdraw his forces to Lohgarh and after having a day's rearguard action to stall the enemy forces, would escape into the forests beyond Lohgarh alongwith his forces. This strategy he successfully achieved in both the battles of Lohgarh in 1710 and 1713 A. D. The author had visited the site of Lohgarh and the ground conditions clearly establish the above position. The last few kilometres distance does not have even a cart road to the fortress and the surrounding area totally unsuited for habitation. There are remains of rear guard action fortifications all around the fortress to stall enemy advance by suicidal squads and these are stated to be fifty in number. Numerous historians have stated that Banda Bahadur established his capital at Lohgarh, which does not seem to be based on any concrete evidence, but merely on historical heresay as the small fortress covering a few acres could not accommodate a state capital howsoever small the state may be. The basic needs of a capital in its central location, is easy accessibility and sufficient area for habitation etc are totally wanting at Lohgarh site and the examination of the area clearly establishes that the capital of the Sikh state could not have been Lohgarh. Banda Bahadur had given the salient features of the capital of the Sikh state



on the reverse of the coin but no name of Sirhind or Lohgarh etc. He has called the capital of the Sikh state as "*la aman al dahar*" or "*la aman al din*", adorned as the refuge of the world or the most protected place which in next coin became the protection of the "*masavarat shahar zinat*" the picture of a beautiful city, "*Altakht Khalsa Mubarak Bakht*", where the fortunate throne of Khalsa state is located and this legend does establish that Khalsa State had not established any state capital in 1710-13 A. D. and had only established base camps fortresses and Thanas etc. In fact one is inclined to believe that Sikhs never got sufficient time to set up a state capital and all their time was spent in an attempt to retain their acquired territories and hence there is no name of the town on the coins.

Historians have called Banda Bahadur as successor of Guru Gobind Singh, Sucha Padshah etc, some more informed have called false Guru. But most of them state that he took on regal authority. Khushwant Singh calls him an emperor, Ganda Singh calls him a King except in name based on the prevailing medieval concept of kingship and the absolute hold of the ruler over his subject. This has not been true of the Sikh organisations. The spirit of democracy fed deep in the very foundations of the Sikh society by their Gurus and the spirit of collective leadership bequeathed to the Khalsa by the tenth master was too strong amongst the Sikhs that any one person could not think of abrogating it to himself much less of assuming it. This was equally true even after half a century when Sikhs occupied Lahore in 1765 under the leadership of Jassa Singh Ahluwalia who had successfully led the Sikh forces for over a quarter century. Banda Bahadur was the first amongst equals but was certainly not the absolute ruler or leader in the contemporary sense. He had not only been giving due consideration to the opinion of senior Sikhs who came with him from Nander, he also gave them all the senior commands and governorship of territories. There are instances of the Khalsa over-ruling Banda Bahadur and his acceptance of their verdict. This is further established

by the fact that all symbols of sovereignty were in fact of the State and Sikh Gurus and no epithet howsoever minor was adopted for himself by Banda Bahadur.

From the above historical and numismatic accounts as well as the correct historical background we take up the numismatic analysis of these coins. The available coins are :

1. **John Deyell's Coin** : The details are given by John Deyell in his above quoted article. The drawings and photograph of this coin have also appeared in Hans Herlli's *Coins of the Sikhs*, and *standard Guide to South Asian Coins*. The author has however, not been able to secure a photograph there of from John Deyell (see page attached).

2. **Charles Panish's Coin** : Besides the information given by Charles Panish the drawings and photographs are given by Hans Herlli and the standard guide to South Asian coins. The author has also received a tinfoil of the coin with its details from Charles Panish (see plate attached).

3. **Mrs. Norma J. Puddester's Coin** : Mrs. Puddester is with Canadian High Commission in Hong Kong, is a keen collector of Sikh coins and her coin is the same die struck as that of Panish except that the size of the disc is little larger. A photograph of the coin with its details is awaited from Mrs Puddester. Since her coin and that of Panish are similar, the numismatic investigation is confined to the first two coins only. Although John Deyell has incorrectly based his historical investigations on Kamwar Khan, other aspects of his investigations have been carried out quite logically and correctly. John Deyell is correct in his assessment that his coin is an earlier issue than that of Panish as it carries the numerical 2 and the other coins carry the numeral 3. He is however, incorrect in saying that his coin is the first issue of Banda Bahadur. The prevailing practice on contemporary coinage had been to use the word '*Ahad*' on first issues instead of numeral 1 and there are evidences that Sikhs were using this word '*Ahad*' on their state correspondence of the first year of their new Sammat. The first coin is as yet to be located alongwith the account of Ihsan Ijad or any other

contemporary historian for its examination and comparison with the historical account.

John Deyell has stated that Ganda Singh's addition of the word 'Singh' with Gobind on the obverse legend has hopelessly muddled the rhythm. Ganda Singh has the flair of adding 'Sikh' to the names of historic Sikh personalities as the same is deemed to be an inherent part of the name and not a surname or subcaste. One is inclined to agree that Ganda Singh may have added the word 'Singh' with Gobind without having it on any historic evidence, but the second coin has the word 'Singh' added to 'Gobind', thus establishing that the Sikhs themselves made the said change in 1712 A. D. (See plate attached), assuming that the simple word 'Govind' as much was not in full reverence to their Guru who had made Singh an essential part of the Sikh names. The question as to why and how Ganda Singh added the word 'Singh' becomes irrelevant due to the actual appearance of it on the third year's coin. How John Deyell missed it is not clear.

John Deyell has examined in great detail the different present day dictionary meaning of the various words used in the legends and the grammatic aberrations and disturbance of the poetic rhythm and metre. In the examination of these three century old legends, we have to keep in mind that persian language was already in its decline in India since Aurangzeb's time. The non-muslim majority had not taken to Persian language except those who had taken state employment. Further the grammatic sophistication of a language ascends or descends with the cultural and social decadence or degeneration of the society. Sikhs who had emerged from the lowest strata of Hindu society were rather poor in the knowledge of Persian language and far more ignorant about the grammatic niceties and sophistications of the language. Hence the meaning of the legends are to be appreciated in the light of the Sikh ethos and tradition as what we wish to know is the thought content and basis thereof and not merely the present day

dictionary meaning.

The meaning of the legends according to our understanding, keeping in view the Sikh ethos should be as under:

**Obverse** The coin has been struck in both the worlds herein and hereafter. With and gurantee of Guru Nanak's sword or granted by Guru Nanak under the strength of his sword. The victory of Guru Gobind Singh, King of Kings has been achieved with the grace of Sacha Sahib, the God almighty. Sikhs have always believed in God almighty and taken their ten gurus as one identity and all their saviours. God and Nanak to Gobind Singh stand encompassed in this couplet.

**Reverse** Varying literal meanings have been given by various historians. Ganda Singh has changed his earlier rendering into another which is even less convincing. To our understanding it should be (*Zarb-a-aman-ul-dahar*) coined at the refuge of the world, the most protected place safe and peaceful, the emphasis is primarily on security of the place, (*masawarat-Shahr-Zniat*) the pircure of a beautiful city, the word *zinat* should appropriately linked with 'Shahr' and not *altakht* (*attakht mubarak altakht*) the auspicious throne. With the addition of the world 'Khalsa' before or after 'bakht' would mean the auspicious throne of Khalsa.

Thus meaning coined at the place of peace add security, picture of a beautiful city where the auspicious throne of Khalsa is located. The word Khalsa appears on both the coins and whether the same was also printed on the first coin or was an innovation of the second year can only be ascertained after the first year coin is located.

John Deyell has been the first to assert with logical arguments that Sikh coins need not have been minted at Lohgarh, but from the place where it was convenient or where the main strength of the Khalsa army was located. He further stated that from the elegance of his coin pertaining to the second year it can be assumed that it was minted in more secure and peaceful circumstances than the second coin pertaining to the 3rd year which is rather crude and dumpy.

There is a change on the reverse legend of the second coin and the words "*aman-al-dahar*" have been changed into "*aman-al-din*" i. e. from the security of the place, it has been called under protection of the faith, which also, in a way, gives an indication to the disturbed conditions at the time of minting. This view gets further support from the fact that when Sikhs had developed their firm hold on territories after 1765, they started giving the names of the mint towns on the reverse of the coins. We share the views of John Deyell that Sikh coins may not have been minted from Lohgarh. The changes on the coins give indication of the change in political situation faced by the newly arisen and growing nation. The study of initial Sikh coinage, however, remains incomplete till the first years' coin and Ijad's account or any other contemporary historical reference are traced and examined by scholars and numismatists. With the three features not known i. e. the name of the ruler, place of mint and the year of minting, the cloud of some uncertainty will remain hanging over these coins till some further conclusive research evidence are forthcoming.

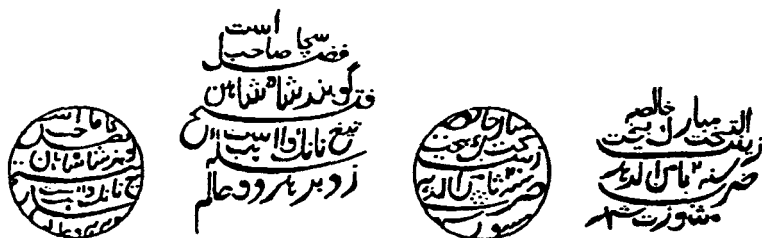
Besides the firm establishment of the position that initial Sikh coinage was started by Banda Bahadur in 1710 A. D. as derived from the historical accounts and numismatic investigation of the coins so far located, it throws light on a very important feature of the Sikh concept of sovereignty amongst them shortly after the demise of Guru Gobind Singh and with the institution of the first Sikh State. The legends both on the coin and seal give a true depiction of the concept of temporal sovereignty as bequeathed by the tenth master to the Khalsa Panth. The growth of the community in misls and then a strong monarchy, over a period of a century and a half, did in some way dilute the initial concept of sovereignty but the symbol of sovereignty of the Khalsa so chosen remained the same till the very last days of the Sikh state. It is amazing that Banda Bahadur belonging to a different religious creed became disciple of Guru Gobind Singh and within a short space of a few months or even less

was selected the commander of the Khalsa army and sent to Panjab where all his energies and time was sent in creating and defending the infant Sikh state. Yet in a short time he could understand, express the Sikh concept of sovereignty in such simple, lucid and meaningful words that leave alone any change therein, no Sikh authority has ever suggested any change or any improvement therein. He certainly had a spectacular insight in the Sikh ethos and traditions besides, his being an extra-ordinary commander of forces in whose psyche the fear of death was totally non existent.

Banda Bahadur gave in the coins the most appropriate and elegantly discriptive definition to the concept of Sikh sovereignty as bequeathed to the Khalsa Panth by its Gurus which became universally acceptable during the entire duration of Sikh State i. e. from 1710 to 1850. If at all in the near or distant future Sikhs regain their sovereignty the legends framed by Banda Bahadur are likely to decorate the future Sikh currency as the true exposition of the Sikh sovereignty, such is the extent the same have been engraved in the Sikh ethos.

### INITIAL SIKH COINAGE

#### Second Year's Coin.



#### OBVERSE.

SIKKAH ZAD BAR HAR DO ALAM TEGH-NANAK WAHIB AST  
FATEH GOBIND SHAH-SHAHAN FAZAL SACHCHA SAHIB AST  
REVERSE.

ZARB BA AMAN-UD-DAHAR MASWARAT SHAHR ZINAT-UT-  
TAKHT

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 KHALSA MUBARAK BAKHT.  
 THIRD YEAR'S COIN.



THE WORD GOBIND IS WRITTEN AS GOBIND SINGH ON THE  
 OBTVERSE.

THE WORD AMAN-UD-DAHR IS WRITTEN AS AMAN-UD-DIN  
 ON THE REVERSE.

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41. Parmeshwari Lal Gupta, *Coins of Dal Khalsa and Lahore Darbar*, Government of Punjab, Chandigarh, 1989, pp. 12-13.
42. Extract from P. L. Gupta's letter dated 12th Dec. 1989 in reply to the author's communication.
43. Herlli Hans 'Coins of the Sikhs', *op. cit.*, p. 46.
44. Wiggins Ken and Goron Stan. *The Gold and Silver Coinage of the Sikhs*. International colloquium Indian Institute of Research in Numismatic Studies, Anganeri, 1984, pp. 125-126.
45. *Tuzak-i-Jahanigiri*, Tramlabid by Elexander Roders & Hency Beveridge, 1909-1914, pp. 72-73.
46. Bhagat Singh, *Sikh Polity*, Oriental Publishers and distributors,

New Delhi, 1978, p. 200.

47. Note :

In these two paragraphs, a bird eye view of the development of Sikh traditions and political institutions has been given to enable the reader to appreciate the Sikh aspirations in the development of the State sovereignty a collective leadership bequeathed to the Khalsa Panth as such and no individual could lay any claim there to no matter what may be his individual contribution :

48. Hari Ram Gupta, *History of the Sikhs*, Vol. II, pp. 12-15, Hari Ram Gupta has supported the above with various contemporary references.

49. *Akhbar-i-Darbar-i-Mualla*, News Report, dated 10th Jan. 1910, *op. cit.*,

50. Ganda Singh, 'Life of Banda Singh Bahadur', *op. cit.*, p. 72.

51. *Ibid.*, pp. 138 to 145 and pp. 187 to 190.

52. John Deyell, 'Banda Bahadur and the First Sikh Coinage,' *op. cit.*, p. 65.

53. 'Akhbar-Darbar-i-Mualla', new ruler's account of 9th Jan. 1711, *op. cit.*

54. John Deyell, 'Banda Bahadur and The First Sikh Coinage,' *op. cit.*, p. 62.

55. *Ibid.*, p. 62.

## SIKHS OVERSEAS AND THE BRITISH

NAVTEJ SINGH

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Economic pressure created through the imperial regime by the turn of the nineteenth century compelled Punjabi population to migrate to areas of new avenues for the bread. Obviously beginning of the twentieth century witnessed a large scale migration of people from Punjab not only to other provinces of India but to many other countries. Malaya became the choicest place for Punjabis where the number of immigrants reached more than 50,000 by 1915.<sup>1</sup> A majority of them were the Sikhs. The new environment provided the migrated group access to economic and social opportunities of different in nature than were available at home. It influenced their thinking about the character of British control in Punjab as compared to the atmosphere in Malaya. This change in attitude of the immigrants was a matter of great concern to the British authorities for whom it constituted the "prevailing unrest." The administration feared that it would affect the Punjabi population at home when the immigrants would return to Punjab. In order to check this 'process of change' the management reached at certain perceptions which reflected on the one side, the nature of imperial set up; on the other, their racial bias and the tendency to exploit caste and religious distinctions of the controlled populace.

The officials found Punjabi migrants everywhere in Malaya but they were concentrated in the towns. Most of them were engaged in the military and police forces, watchmen, shopmen, carters and labourers. The watchmen

and carter classes constituted the bulk and were considered least satisfactory so far "unrest" was concerned. The administration found the change in immigrants attitude towards the authority of the Raj due to the absence of law of social custom. By this law his place in society was strictly defined, and any attempt to remove from it was punished by his caste-fellows without possibility of appeal.

The immigrant from Punjab on arrival was supplied by his brethren with a suit of *Khaki*; and light employment, giving double the pay he had been accustomed to, was ready to accept the position of watchman. As a result, the administration noticed, he began to drink more, and kept a Malay woman or went to brothels. In Malaya such conduct was not considered untoward, owing to the practical absence of all caste restrictions and to the lax views of his employer, whereas in Punjab these acts would lead to his being out-casted by his people and dismissed by his employer. This kind of loosening of all restraint had a demoralizing effect, and tended to create disrespect for all authority.<sup>3</sup> Thus, loosening of moral codes and absence of social restraints lead to defy the imperial power by the ruled masses.

It was painfully observed that the absence of all good religious influence was another cause of "unrest." The Sikh temples in Malaya were in a bad condition. Theoretically, there were all branches of the Golden Temple; but practically no connection existed and the Golden Temple exercised no supervision. British officials in Malaya knew nothing of the Sikh religion, left the temples severely alone, and no attempt was made to enlist their aid in combating the views which were ruining the Sikh migrants. The administration found that in the present circumstances any such efforts would be useless; since the Poojaris (granthis) were in nearly all cases mere puppets, the willing tools of the most influential and probably also the most seditious Sikhs of the locality.<sup>4</sup> Use of morality, social restraints, observance of religious norms and control over devotional institutions constituted elements of control mechanism.

Continuity and consolidation of caste divisions were equally necessary. The officials feared from the Sikhs more as compared to Muslims and Hindus among the migrants. Probably activities of the Ghadr Party in U.S.A. was the factor influencing the British mind. The administration was satisfied to observe that the Muhammedan Punjabis could live cheaply in Malaya without infringing the laws of caste. For a Hindu migrant the things were different. The hinderance in the observance of his religious scruples created uneasiness because the ghee he purchased was mixed with fat, the flour was bad, margarine was sold as butter and the rice was uneatable. It was found that these difficulties were due to lack of suitable official supervision, which in turn, was due to ignorance of the existence of such difficulties.<sup>5</sup> Thus, sympathy to social norms of one against other social group could act as a balance against each other.

The Punjabi Muhammedan immigrants in nearly every case attended Malay or South Indian mosques, and never came under a Punjabi Moulvie. It was a matter of great satisfaction to the British apprehensions. The blurring of religious distinctions was a dominant factor in the "Unrest" which might conceivably become a danger. In Punjab Sikhs/Hindus and Muhammedans were radically divided from one another, but in Malaya the division was very much less marked. This was mainly due to the practical extinction of the codes of custom and religion, and was also assisted by the fact that all Indians (except Tamils) were classed together in Malaya under the common name of *Bengalees*. Strangers in a foreign land where both *Sahib* and *native* failed to differentiate between them, they were naturally drawn closer together.<sup>6</sup> Perpetuation of caste and religious distinctions were seen as vital for the continuity of British rule.

The administration found that lack of Punjabi surroundings was another cause of the "unrest". In Malaya, the migrant placed himself in a small minority in a foreign land where all nations and creeds lived 'cheek by jowl' and were lax in observance of their respective moral codes and

religious norms. His language with all but his own people became Malay, and he readily adopted the vicious habits so freely offered as 'examples' to him. The Punjabi atmosphere totally disappeared and the migrant rarely seemed possessed of sufficient mental ballast to keep his head in such a changed atmosphere. The migrants who had their wives and children with them were generally better behaved than those who had not brought these ties. The migrant woman in Malaya was comparatively conservative than man.<sup>7</sup>

Again the *Sahib* in Malaya was different to the one to which the migrant had been accustomed. Out there the latter perceived very quickly that no one paid the *Sahib* much respect and that the *Sahib* did not appear to desire it. This new *Sahib* talked to him in Malaya almost on a footing of equality, knew nothing of India or the position of the migrant in Punjab, and through ignorance (sic), did not resent acts of rudeness which would be severely punished in Punjab. Rich Chinese dashed about in motor-cars, while the *Sahib* more often patronised the humble rickshaw. Moreover, Punjabi policemen had received orders to knock about drunken European beach-combers. Such low down Britishers willingly allowed Punjabis to stand them drinks, nor indeed were they above asking a Punjabi to do so. All this tended to the lowering of the *Sahib* in the eyes of the migrants from Punjab.<sup>8</sup> The racial equality and power to the controlled people over the 'Whites' were unacceptable.

The superior treatment and position of migrants from Punjab in Malaya compared to other native races also tended to the same end. The migrant in his occupations of military, police, or watchman was at once placed in a position of authority over a greater or smaller number of people. He was so well paid that he could dress well, the *Sahib* treated him almost as an equal, and the Chinese feared him. His head was easily turned, and thus sudden elevation on arrival in Malaya had a bad effect, developing in him an idea that he was a person of importance.<sup>9</sup> Thus inferiority complex in social and hierarchical position alongwith low economic

status was another necessary pre-requisite.

The State of mental isolation of the migrant from Punjab was another cause of 'evil'. In that part of the world nobody understood or sympathised with the migrants from Punjab. But he always managed quickly to learn sufficient Malay to communicate with the Europeans and the various native races. But his mutual comprehension was nil. On the rare occasions, however, when he was greeted by a *Sahib* in his own tongue, his whole face lighted up and his mind appeared to receive (sic) a distinct stimulus.<sup>10</sup> If he was in government service, he was absolutely in the hands of some senior migrant. Very few of the government or police officials knew any Hindustani or Panjabi, and all questions about the migrants from Punjab had to be discussed and decided in Malay through the Punjabi Sargeant Major of Police. Again in Malaya, the British and officials generally had no knowledge of caste and class distinctions among Sikhs. The Sikhs trade on this ignorance with the result that cliques and feuds went to the detriment of good order and discipline.<sup>11</sup>

In order to inculcate 'discipline to extract loyalty' the administration recommended that the British officials in Malaya were to be trained on 'matters Indian' so that they become able to treat them from the Indian point of view. For that purpose the wives and families of the migrants from Punjab be invited to Malaya which would act as an anchor on their activities. The interest of the migrants from Punjab should be maintained in agriculture with the allotment of lands to them and their relations including women folk. The new arrivals from Punjab should be educated about the benefits of *Raj* and for that purpose the services of ex-servicemen should be secure. On the psychological side the immensely patronized cinema shows be supplied with films showing Punjab village life. It would affect the migrants strongly and would foster recollections of the stricter simple life. Formation of a Punjabi Protectorate by the Punjabi and Malay speaking British officials and assisted by Sikh and

Muslim pensioners specially selected in order to give advice to the migrants from Punjab was recommended as another measure.<sup>12</sup> It would help to have control over them and convey that the British authority existed there to assist, reward, and, if necessary, to punish.

Sikh leaders such as Rai Bahadur Sadhu Singh be encouraged to visit these migrants. In order to observance of religious practices the Golden Temple be directed to have more control on the immigrants and if possible the *Poojaris* (Granthis) be selected by it with the final approval of the government in Punjab and be despatched fully trained to the religious centres in Malaya. But their period should not be more than three years as during their long stay they were likely to be influenced by the atmosphere in Malaya. The migrants should be registered and the migrants in the occupation of watchman should be kept under strict police control. Their free time must be occupied by some other activity so that they should not hatch mischief. The activities of the Germans or the Seditionist Party be watched with alert. The British officials from Malaya be despatched to Punjab to study the peoples, customs, languages and police methods. Finally, Sikh Advisory Boards be instituted and the *Panchayat* system be practised in Malaya among the Sikhs or migrants from Punjab.<sup>13</sup>

Thus the British concern towards the migrants from Punjab in Malaya was strongly influenced by the racial discrimination and was indicative of the evolution of the policy of repression in diversified form; by the perpetuation of social and hierarchical divisions; intolerance towards equality and economy, and suppression of any kind of awareness among the controlled population. In fact the British were frustrated to keep their hold by immoral means contrary to their proclamation of the moral basis with justice. Moreover, the very inherent limitations and contradictions of the control mechanism were presenting before them a new type of awareness and understanding which was visible to both the ruled and the rulers in the form of the latter's



ultimate exit. Yet they were hopeful of maintaining their sway and were busy in formulating the repressive policies against the controlled masses, but these very measures were carrying with them the seeds of ultimate challenge to their authority. In other words the imperial power could sense its extinction from the occupied territory since long back.

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Note by an Officer on Special Duty Under the Director of Criminal Intelligence, *Secret, Foreign Proceedings*, B/14280, 1915, p.1.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 1.
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Ibid.*, p. 2.
7. *Ibid.*
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Ibid.*
10. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
11. *Ibid.*
12. *Ibid.*
13. *Ibid.*, p. 3-4.

## CHIEF KHALSA DIWAN IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE (1902-20) : A CRITIQUE

SHYAMALA BHATIA

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Through the centuries, a constant inflow of trading and invading communities had left their mark on Punjabi society. Scores of tribal groups settled here and made their home in Punjab resulting in ethnic intermixing and intermingling. In a frequently and periodically changing social environment, rigidity of caste and religious restrictions crumbled. In these conditions, ties of kinship and village affinities superceded those of religion and caste. Punjabies identified themselves in the broad sense of belonging to the "Pind" (the village). After the identification of village came the identification of family, caste and religion. Village ties were stronger than religious bonds. The village society was a world in itself, where resided Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs, many a time sharing common places of veneration—a dargah of a Pir or a holy tree. As Ibbetson, after exhaustive study of castes and tribes concluded, "People are bound by tribal and social customs far more than any rules of religion. Where the whole tone and feeling of the countryside is Indian, as it is in the Eastern Punjab, the Musalman is simply the Hindu with a difference. Where that tone and feeling is that of the country beyond the Indus, as it is on the Punjab frontier, the Hindu is almost as the musalman. The difference is national rather than religious."<sup>1</sup>

But even while Ibbetson was preparing this report, the social conditions in Punjab had begun to change. In the colonial milieu, the distinct Punjabi social fabric was exposed

to a new type of challenge. Contact with western world and a new kind of education increased the pace of change and it also gave a new direction to change. Upward social mobility had been going on in Punjab earlier also. As Ibbetson quoted a saying about Saiyads, which was found to be equally applicable to other castes and tribes also : "Last year I was a Julaha, this year I am a Sheikh; next year if prices rise I shall be a Saiyad". He went on to add, "....and if generation be substituted for year, the process is sufficiently common."<sup>2</sup> But now in late nineteenth century, the number of people who rose in social scale having taken advantage of new educational avenues increased. And more importantly, they came to be concentrated in the urban areas where they could interact with like-minded men. This new group had members from all castes and from all religions. These men had severed village ties, having come to cities to avail of modern education. Many of them had cut caste bonds and had acquired education which was unthinkable for their fellow caste-men half a century back. Now these physically uprooted, socially upward mobile, politically conscious, economically stronger and mentally alert educated group sought to carve a place for itself in a congenial social environment. It was a very small group and first its member grew closer to each other sharing common language, common background and common interest. This educated group first tried to cleanse the society of various social evils and in the process reformed and redefined the religion. These men took up the work of socio-religious reforms with a crusading spirit. And in their enthusiasm to project their own religious values as pure and superior to all these educated leaders of all three Punjabi communities were involved in polemics. Slowly, the small western educated cohesive group began to come apart. And led by these men, the three communities began to drift away from each other. Cohesiveness was replaced by confrontation. Co-operation gave place to competition. The question of identification by religion gained importance. The Aryas, the Ahmadias, the

Singh Sabhaites all were involved in defining their religion and in the process all three communities adapted their religion according to contemporary needs. All of them also, in the name of cleansing their respective religions of degenerating practices and restoring them to original purity, redefined their religion. The educated Sikhs also began the process of purging their religion of external influences. The Sikh renaissance movement begun in 1873 gradually gained momentum.

The three phases of Sikh renaissance movement can be categorised broadly as "Hum Hindu Nahin" phase, where Sikhism was sought to be delineated from Hinduism. This was mostly a negative phase demolishing the prevalent contemporary idea of regarding Sikhism as a branch of Hindu religion. Bhai Jawahar Singh, Bhai Kahan Singh, Bhai Dit Singh, Bhai Gurmukh Singh began this movement and brought it into direct confrontation, not only with Arya Samajists but also with Sikh religious leaders who maintained that Sikhism was a part of Hinduism. When the leadership of this movement was wrested by Chief Khalsa Diwan, the Sikh renaissance entered into a second phase which was more constructive. In this period, the leadership provided "depth and spiritual fervour" and propagated the idea "we are Sikhs" and "we are distinct." This was a more successful and popular campaign because men who had been facing an identity crisis could honourably and proudly say who they were. Destruction of prevalent and widely accepted idea gave place to construction of firm belief 'that we are Sikhs'. A demarcation had been made, and more importantly this distinction had been legally recognised by the foreign rulers. The third phase of Sikh renaissance began with the Akali movement, when Sikhs became "Singhs".

In the closing years of the last century, Sikhs were at the crossroads. On the one hand there was a virulent and sometimes acrimonious attack by the newly aroused Arya Samajists and other educated Hindus to either belittle Sikhism or to claim Sikhism as a part of Hindu religion. On

the other side was a small section of educated Sikhs who had begun a campaign to establish Sikhism as a distinct religion. In between were the foreign rulers who were ever watchful of any new development and were never a disinterested party. The alien government was ever ready to interfere in the socio-religious developments if it was, both, either beneficial or detrimental to imperialist interests. Yet, the government's negative role of playing up one community's fear against aspirations of members of other community, was still to take gigantic proportions. Indian National Congress had come into existence but it still had to spread its wings and even to make its presence felt. Communal parties had yet to come into existence. Different religious communities, through their religious organisations, were playing a positive role in making their communities strong, cohesive and viable force. In these conditions Singh Sabha laid the foundation of Sikh awakening.

In the process of evolution of Sikh community from disorganised mass to articulate minority, a beginning had been made with the Singh Sabha movement. It was established with the explicit aim "to restore Sikhism to its pristine purity, disseminate religious ideas through books and newspapers edited by its members, to reform and readmit the apostates and to cultivate English Government's interest in educational programme of the Sikhs. The parent Singh Sabha, established at Amritsar, soon had branches all over Punjab. Many a dedicated Sikh took up the work of religious and social reformation with missionary zeal. The Lahore Singh Sabha soon overshadowed other branches and became more aggressive, more forward looking, than the Amritsar Singh Sabha, which was more reticent and more controlled. But by the turn of the century, with the establishment of Chief Khalsa Diwan, once again Amritsar became the centre of Sikh movement.

The Chief Khalsa Diwan was set up as a central controlling agency of various Singh Sabhas spread all over Punjab, with the "mission" to help in "the process of

evolution, to call into play a sense of national aspiration, a feeling of national upheaval and change", and it was also added that, "Chief Khalsa Diwan was fated to formulate the aspirations and grievances of the Sikh public, settle the religious differences and channelise Sikh public opinion".<sup>3</sup> The primary aim was still the same, e. g., "To promote the spiritual, intellectual, moral, social, educational and economic welfare of Khalsa Panth", but the tone had changed. From restoring Sikhism to its original purity now struggle to be waged was to "promote welfare of Khalsa Panth", and to "safeguard political rights, by making government aware of problems, needs and grievances of Sikhs". Chief Khalsa Diwan was to "usher a new era of spiritual uplift" and to make a bold headway towards neglected reforms as for supplying the great deficiency of depth and spiritual fervour".<sup>4</sup> Leadership at this time was provided by men like Sardar Sunder Singh Majithia, Bhai Mohan Singh Vaid and Bhai Vir Singh who all served the Sikh community to the best of their ability.

The most important and crucial issue at this time was to define a "Sikh". Not only the government, but the Sikhs themselves were not able to come up with a definite identification of "Sikh". The Sikhs were in a dilemma. Who is a Sikh? Some leaders had already declared, 'Hum Hindu Nahin'. But now the question was, if Sikhs are not Hindus, then what is their religion? And, what is Sikh religion? An answer to this question involved defining, explaining and clarifying Sikh ideology, as well as an explanation of importance of observance of outward symbols of Sikhism. At this time a debate was going on among educated Sikhs on the question of Sahajdharies, whether to include them in Sikh community or not, that was the point of controversy. This issue had gained social importance because with the introduction of decennial census population figures, by religion had come to be noticed. Many in Punjab, in the census, returned their religion as Hindu-Sikh, which, to a group of Sikhs appeared to be contradictory. The issue

gained political importance when in 1880's, in Punjab, communal representation was introduced in local governing bodies. Population figures on religion basis began to count. Religion was linked to administrative institutions. Basis of politicisation of religion had been laid. Macauliffe wrote to the editor of *The Khalsa Advocate* 'It has become a serious question whether Sikhs shall be guided by their sacred books or submit to the guidance of illiterate and interested persons fostered on ancient superstition. I trust the enlightened members of the Sikh community will rally to your standard and by doing so contribute not only to their spiritual but to their temporal welfare'.<sup>5</sup>

Chief Khalsa Diwan had to grapple with this issue of defining a "Sikh". Political astuteness and pragmatic approach of its leaders is evident in its handling of this important issue. As against the position taken by the Lahore Singh Sabha a few years earlier, Chief Khalsa Diwan forcefully advocated that belief in Sikh scriptures was sufficient for a person to be counted as a Sikh. In an attempt to clarify Chief Khalsa Diwan's stand, the editorial of *The Khalsa Advocate* stated "we are sorry to note, undue fanaticism among a certain portion of the Sikhs is sure to bring unwholesome results in its wake. The fiery and fanatic spirit makes no distinction between Sikhs and non-Sikhs. Our attempt to sever ourselves as a religious body from other communities of India, to know and feel that our religion is quite different from Hinduism and Mohammadanism is certainly a move in the right direction....But in doing so we are failing in one most important direction i. e. we are alienating the sympathies of Sikh or the Sahajdhari portion of our community. Although they are not Khalsa or Singhs, they are nevertheless our co-religionists who have equal claims with us on the great boons conferred on us by our gurus. We must forcefully bring to the minds of our readers the three stages of Sewak, Sikh and Singh and also that the general name of our community is the Sikh community and not Singh community. The Singh or the Khalsa is a portion

of this larger body, call it military or whatever you may, still it is a portion and not the whole".<sup>6</sup> When the government officers were preparing the census report, Chief Khalsa Diwan through *The Khalsa Advocate*, appealed to all, "whoever believed in the holy book and the Sikh scriptures to return their religion as Sikh." It warned its readers that "an astute Hindu, if he happens to be incharge of census sheet would naturally try to browbeat a Sahajdhari for giving himself out as a Hindu. Plain and straight answer should be returned that the census official has nothing whatever to do whether a man has taken Amrit or wears Kesas or not. I appeal to all Sikh bodies, preachers, teachers and men of high learning to do their level best to enlighten the illiterate folk of the Panth, as to the tricks that might be used to get them entered as Hindus".<sup>7</sup> Chief Khalsa Diwan's strategy, it appears, bore fruit because number of Sikhs, as tabulated in 1911 census was much larger than in 1901 and this was mostly because of change in classification and heightened awareness among a portion of the community.

When Chief Khalsa Diwan requested the government to make certain, while making appointments, that candidate was in reality a Sikh, the reply by the Punjab Government was illuminating. It answered that a distinction could easily be made between the Sikhs and the Rajputs, who also used 'Singh', but it expressed its inability to make detailed examination of all baptismal symbols.<sup>8</sup> The debate over definition of a "Sikh" had not concluded.

While on one hand Chief Khalsa Diwan was engaged in popularising the idea that belief in scriptures was enough to be counted as a Sikh, on the other hand, it began a vigorous campaign to make the outward symbols of Sikhism popular and get constitutional recognition for these. In 1914, Chief Khalsa Diwan petitioned the government to exempt the Sikhs carrying kirpan, from the purview of Arms Act. The government acceded to this request and permission to wear kirpan for ceremonial



purposes was granted.<sup>9</sup> Now the issue of another important symbol was taken up, the right to keep long hair and wear turbans. Government conceded the right to wear turbans to Sikhs in Indian Medical Service and in the London Inns of Law.<sup>10</sup> Outward symbols were gaining importance and Chief Khalsa Diwan was busy securing legal recognition for these. These were major victories in the struggle for getting Sikhism established as a distinct, separate religious entity.

In the early years of the twentieth century, rivalry and competition among educated Punjabies for government jobs had begun. Posts were few and number of educated Indians steadily growing. Chief Khalsa Diwan found an effective way to generate employment opportunities for Sikhs. It appealed to the government to promote the "language of the people".<sup>11</sup> The government was successfully memorialised and Punjabi language was introduced in Post and Telegraph offices and in Railway departments. This automatically increased the need for Punjabi knowing personnel. Chief Khalsa Diwan also petitioned the government to introduce Punjabi language as medium of instruction in village schools. Thus language issue was also linked to religion.

In pursuance of its aim of giving a distinct identity to the Sikhs, Chief Khalsa Diwan decided to celebrate the Gurburabs. The leaders felt that "like Ramlilas have contributed to keeping alive Hinduism", Gurburabs be celebrated, "not only to show gratitude towards Gurus who sacrificed themselves and their all but also that they do the work of silent preacher. They remind the Sikhs that they are Sikhs"<sup>12</sup> Memorandums were sent to the government to declare birthdays of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh and Hola Mohalla as public holidays.<sup>13</sup> In 1905, Gurburabs were added to the Punjab government holiday list.

In its effort to de-Hinduise Sikhism, Chief Khalsa Diwan attacked the various prevalent rites and rituals.

Clarifying Diwan's position and stand, the editorial of the *Khalsa Advocate*, stated "Adoption of Sikh rites mean, you have at once done away with several injurious customs at birth, marriage and death. You have done away with foolish *sutak* and *patak*, with child marriage, obscene songs, useless marriage expense and dancing girls. Adopt the Sikh rites and you have at same time introduced intermarriage and widow remarriage....Adopt Sikh rites and you have rung the death knell of baneful system of caste and introduced interdining and inter-mixing of low castes"<sup>14</sup> The campaign to do away with Hinduised marriage customs and popularise simple marriage ceremony bore fruit when Anand Marriage Act was passed in 1909. It gave legal sanction to the marriage ceremony performed according to the Sikh rites.

Another notable achievement of Chief Khalsa Diwan leaders in pursuit of goal of "restoring Sikhism to its pristine purity" was putting an end to idol worship. While Guru Nanak had raised his voice against idol worship, by beginning of twentieth century, Sikhism had degenerated to the extent that idols of various Hindu Gods and Goddesses were worshipped in gurdwaras. In 1905, these idols were removed by the Diwan leaders from the precincts of the Golden temple. Demarcation of places of worship had begun. While Singh Sabha had not established any separate places of worship, Chief Khalsa Diwan took the first step in the direction of isolating places of worship.

Chief Khalsa Diwan leaders realised that their efforts to purge their religion of external influences would be successful only if masses were educated and made aware of real form of Sikhism. Spread of education was also necessary for the progress of the community. The contribution of the Chief Khalsa Diwan in the field of education is noteworthy. Sunder Singh Majithia became the secretary of the Managing committee of Khalsa College in 1902. The college, in dire financial straits was, according

to the lieutenant Governor, on brink of closure when Sunder Singh Majithia's organising and fund raising capability came to its rescue. Not only did he collect donations from prosperous Sikhs and Rajas, the government itself was moved to grant substantial amount to the college. The government also levied a tax on Sikh peasantry, the collection of which was meant only for support of this college.<sup>15</sup> However, from government's view point this "child of the Chief Khalsa Diwan" became a "hot bed of sedition" where teachers like "Jodh Singh, Nihal Singh, Sunder Singh, Hari Singh Cheema and others incited students".<sup>16</sup> The government, it was stated, had received complaints that the college was turning out boys with a marked anti-British bias.<sup>17</sup> The college, it was felt, was run by "neo-Sikhs like Sunder Singh Majithia, Vir Singh and Tarlochan Singh and this provided striking evidence as to the true nature of the underlying ideals of neo-Sikh propaganda".<sup>18</sup> These fears and apprehensions led the rulers to take action to nip the trouble in the bud. In 1908, the government took over the control of the Khalsa college. The college no longer belonged to the Sikhs. The Sikhs expressed a fear that now, due to official control, the college would produce loyal students "Namak-halals", loyal to government.<sup>19</sup> The managing committee of the college expressed its displeasure at the infringement of its autonomy and requested the authorities to take into consideration the Sikh public opinion. But the Diwan leaders could not formulate an acceptable argument backed by effective agitational strategy. Finally, the matter "was buried under pretext of securing more information".<sup>20</sup> Undoubtedly, the leadership had failed. Yet, the Diwan found an alternative to carry on its educational activities in a free and unencumbered way, Sunder Singh Majithia continued to be associated with the management of the Khalsa College, but only for another four years. Majithia as well as Professor Jodh Singh and Sardar Narain Singh were

constrained to leave the institution in 1912-13<sup>21</sup> But these leaders had already started The Educational Conference, in 1908, to continue their educational work. This conference was managed by a thirteen member committee. The Diwan leaders played a prominent part in this Conference as it had the controlling power through the seven members nominated by Chief Khalsa Diwan. Inspired by Sunder Singh Majithia, guided by Bhai Vir Singh and Professor Jodh Singh, Sikh educational conference carried on the work of educating Sikh boys and girls.<sup>22</sup> Sikhs of "all shades of opinion" gave moral as well as financial support to this conference and the government which had taken over management of Khalsa College to check spread of national aspirations among "loyal Sikhs" came to fear that "would the funds collected and entrusted to Diwan be spent on education as such or for the promotion of the "national" objects which the Diwan has so greatly at heart".<sup>23</sup> The Conference began and carried on its work earnestly. In 1908, there were only seven Khalsa schools,<sup>24</sup> but by 1920, the education committee of Diwan was running 200 educational institutions, both for boys as well as for girls.<sup>25</sup> Here, along with formal education, spiritual, moral and religious training also formed an important part of the curriculum. Students were taught to follow the teachings of the gurus. The Sikh teaching of universal brotherhood and equality of all was emphasised. While taking care to teach the children to treat all as equal, and imparting education according to true principles of Sikhism, the Educational Conference brought to the notice of intelligentsia also, the need to improve the lot of the depressed classes. The Conference appealed "for justice to them in the light of the teachings of the Gurus. The result was revolutionary awakening among the masses. It indirectly led to the Gurdwara Reform Movement against professional priests".<sup>26</sup>

While the Conference was busy opening primary and

secondary schools for the young, the Khalsa Tract Society attached to the Chief Khalsa Diwan was catering to the needs of the adults. To spread the message of Sikhism and educate the masses in real tenets of their religion, this society brought out articles, books and pamphlets on various aspects of Sikhism. Bhai Vir Singh alone wrote 720 tracts on various subjects. He was ably supported by Mohan Singh Vaid in his missionary work. Books with self-explanatory titles like *"Sikhi Ki Hai, Quami unnati, Priya Khalsa, Pakhand Nashak, Sikh Mat Ki Talim par Risalon Ka Silsila"*<sup>27</sup> etc., were written.

Along with their literary pursuits in the service of the community, these men were also not averse to taking action against prevailing evils. Bhai Mohan Singh Vaid tried to put an end to unholy practices going on in Taran Taran gurdwara. Though his attempt failed, he foretold that these goings on would, before long, become memories of bad times.<sup>28</sup> The forecast was soon fulfilled when other reformists started an agitation to remove the corrupt head of the gurdwara. The deputy commissioner initially asked the head to proceed on two months leave. This placatory gesture failed to pacify the Sikhs. The agitators then warned the head to choose between resignation and death. Bowing before popular, outraged opinion, the head asked for pardon in a public meeting held at Jallianwala Bagh. The reformers had won a decisive battle.

Guru Gobind Singh had founded the Khalsa Panth with Panj Piaras all belonging to the so called low castes of Hinduism. By 1900, Sikhs were following caste system to the extent that lower caste men were looked down upon by others. Arya Samaj, which had begun a vigorous campaign to reclaim the low caste Hindus and Sikhs was swiftly and relentlessly succeeding when Chief Khalsa Diwan awoke to the danger of losing a sizable part of Sikh community to Hinduism. Chief Khalsa Diwan's first success in this direction was when in 1909, in Jalandhar,

its leaders outwitted the Aryas who had gathered there to purify a group of low caste Sikhs. The beginning thus made was taken to its logical end when in 1920 three professors of Khalsa College, Prof. Teja Singh, Prof. Niranjan Singh and Baba Harkishan Singh, on behalf of "*Khalsa biradari*" led like minded men, purified the *mazhabis* and then took them in a procession to the Golden temple.<sup>29</sup> But the reformists victory was still not complete. The Mahant and the priest were reluctant to distribute prasad to these men, but the reformists held their ground and after a reference to holy books, carried the day; "The so called custodians of the Golden temple left and the gurdwara was freed".<sup>30</sup>

The Golden Temple, the seat of Sikh religion, had become a centre of several evil and nefarious activities. The management was itself involved in these practices and had no interest in restoring the sanctity of the place. As *The Khalsa Advocate* queried. "Do the authorities of Darbar Sahib discharge duties faithfully? ....No! Chief responsible officer is quite a puppet playing in the hands of those whose business simply would have been to carry out the orders given by him. The relation of master and servant is inverted and servant plays the master."<sup>31</sup> Golden Temple, since the annexation of Punjab was being governed by a manager appointed by the government. The government or its agents took no interest in improving the conditions in the Gurdawaras. The government was a silent spectator when the reformists led by Chief Khalsa Diwan removed the idols of Hindu Gods from the precincts of the Temple, because the government's interests were not endangered. A step in the direction of improving the conditions was taken by the Chief Khalsa Diwan leaders, when they petitioned the government to grant to the Sikh community the right to appoint mahants. Immediately after its inception, Chief Khalsa Diwan appealed to the government to amend the rules of management of the Darbar Sahib. It was alleged

that the "present system of managing the local Darbar Sahib through an officially nominated manager, in appointing whom the general Sikh public, the party most deeply and directly interested in, are not allowed or invited to have a choice, is not the best."<sup>32</sup> A grievance was aired in 1908, through the same paper that a minor had been appointed as head Granthi of the Golden Temple, but "there was no stir in the community".<sup>33</sup> The authorities, realising the importance of controlling the Gurdwaras were not willing to loosen their hold over the premier institution. Petrie, with great foresight and astute analysis, preparing his confidential Memorandum on Sikh politics in 1911 had concluded and cautioned his superiors that "the consequences could be serious if the Tat Khalsa (true Sikh) succeeded in obtaining possession of Golden Temple and are in a position to arrogate to themselves the leadership in religious affairs which they had already assumed in politics. The probability of their meeting with success in such a move is not very remote."<sup>34</sup> This arrangement had been made to keep Sikh aspiration under control, check and supervision.<sup>35</sup> These government appointed managers, enjoying financial benefits concomitant with their position had vested interests to tow the government line and to follow official diktat. The government used these mahants from time to time to put across its viewpoint. The extent of government hold over the management of the Golden Temple can be gauged from the fact that a saropa was presented to General Dyer, the man behind the killing of innocent Punjabis assembled at Jallianwala Bagh. "Infact", in the words of Sohan Singh Josh, the real head of the premier Gurdwara at this time was "not Sardar Arur Singh, but the Jila Deputy Commissioner"<sup>36</sup> Chief Khalsa Diwan, in the first decade of this century was not very successful in arousing a sizable section of the community to its right to manage its own religious places. Its pleas and petitions to the government to appoint a committee to manage the

gurdwaras also went unheeded. Undaunted, the leaders continued with their work of generating public opinion against management of Gurdwaras by government appointed officials, but Chief Khalsa Diwan's moderate policies were slow in showing results and people were becoming impatient. An organisation which could force the government to concede rights was need of the hour but the Chief Khalsa Diwan failed to change its approach and the initiative was wrested from its hands by the Akalis. Religion had become inseparable from politics. Politicisation of religion was not far. As Master Tara Singh declared later "Panth is a political organisation which has been founded upon religion....participation in politics with the Sikh community acting as a single political group alone is imperative for the existence of the Sikh religion. Without political organisation and participation in politics, Sikh religion cannot survive."<sup>37</sup>

Pursuing the policy of fighting for their rights according to constitutional methods, the reformers tried to capture the control of gurdwaras through law courts. A law suit was filed against the minor mahant and corrupt trustee of the Gurwaras Babe di Dher. Fight was carried upto the Chief Court, where on technical grounds the case was dismissed. The Sikhs did not accept defeat and filed another case, but when they were asked to deposit Rs 1200 as fees and their application to shift the case to another court was rejected, they were disillusioned and decided to take the law into their own hands.<sup>38</sup>

Gurdwaras, by this time had accumulated vast wealth and owned land, which in itself had become valuable property. The question of wall of Rakabganj in Delhi made the government concede to the management the propritory right on land. An agitation was imminent when the government pulled down the wall surrounding Rakabganj gurdwara to provide a straight road to upcoming government head quarters. Harchand Singh of Layallpur was instrumental in arousing Sikh anger against



this violation of gurdwara property. Chief Khalsa Diwan played the role of a mediator between the agitators and the government. It carried on a correspondence with the government regarding this issue. The question was postponed due to breaking out of World War I. Later, however the government had to bow down before indomitable Sikhs and granted permission to Delhi Sikhs to rebuild the wall. Chief Khalsa Diwan later constituted a Khalsa management committee to manage the gurdwaras of Delhi region.

Sunder Singh Majithia and other leaders of Chief Khalsa Diwan firmly believed in the constitutional system established by the government. From its very inception, Chief Khalsa Diwan adopted a policy of securing representation of Sikhs in the Councils. Though being a socio-religious organisation established with the sole aim of safeguarding the interests of the Sikh community., leadership of Chief Khalsa Diwan firmly believed that adequate representation of Sikhs in the administrative and decision making bodies was imperative for furthering Sikh interest. The British-Indian government, in its eyes, was a dependable ally. Administrators, it appeared, could be persuaded in conceding their demands if the demands were forcefully put forward. In this twenty year period, Chief Khalsa Diwan's stand was vindicated and the government had enacted several measures giving legal sanctions to several socio-religious demands of the Panth. However, the Diwan achieved limited success in attaining the political aim of getting adequate representation for the Sikhs in Councils.

Chief Khalsa Diwan demanded separate representation of Sikhs in all government and semi-government bodies like educational institutions and municipal councils. The lieutenant-governor of Punjab forwarded the demand but central government rejected the recommendation on the grounds that importance of Sikhs was confined to Punjab only. The Sikhs fared badly

in elections. In 1916 elections to Provincial council, Sikhs could not win even one seat. Khalsa Advocate blatantly claimed that sole reason for Sikh defeat was communal.<sup>39</sup> Chief Khalsa Diwan again put forward its demand for separate electorates. It demanded one third representation in provincial legislative councils and same share in Viceroy's Executive and Legislative councils. But Chief Khalsa Diwan was merely sending delegations and petitions to the government and rulers it appeared were neither convinced nor conceding. A group of disgruntled Sikhs now began to denounce Chief Khalsa Diwan as a weak and coward organisation not fit to represent Sikh view point. This dissatisfied group of Sikhs organised the Central Sikh league to fight for political rights of the Sikh Community. Its main plank was to join hands with mainstream nationalists, non-cooperate with the government and thereby exert pressure on the rulers to get one third seats reserved for the Sikhs in the Punjab Councils in the proposed Reform Act. Another section of the Sikh community was also, waiting in the wings to wrest the initiative in religious reform arena. An era in Sikh politics had come to an end.

A section of the Sikh community began to feel that the Chief Khalsa Diwan's political approach was feeble, ineffective and outdated. The idea was gaining ground that the Sikhs needed a political organisation. It was felt that a fresh look at old enemies, the Hindus and the Muslims was need of the hour. The old ally, the government on which Chief Khalsa Diwan had been banking was no longer to be trusted. Sikhs were isolated. The government, on which, Chief Khalsa Diwan leaders had been relying, was not showing any willingness to regard the Sikh community as a separate entity for electoral purposes. On the other hand, on the national level, Indian National Congress and the Muslim League had signed the Lucknow Pact. To the Sikhs, it seemed that if there was any devolution of power, Sikhs would be left

out.<sup>40</sup> The government had also announced its policy to increase "association of Indians in every branch of administration and the gradual development of self-governing institutions" (Montague Declaration, 1917) It was feared that Chief Khalsa Diwan would not join hands with the Congress and due to their isolation the Sikhs would be left out of the new power structure.<sup>41</sup> Apprehensions of political extinction were aired.<sup>42</sup> Political activities of other nationalists were seen from a fresh viewpoint. "It was an insult to the Sikh community to call Ghadarites fallen Sikhs and traitors", *Panth Sewak* wrote. Chief Khalsa Diwan leaders came to be seen as "tools of government and self-seeking toadies".<sup>43</sup> Desire and demand for a political party to look after Sikh interests was becoming stronger. Alternatives to Chief Khalsa Diwan were being found. Central Sikh League provided one alternative. The Akalis provided the other. Moderate era in Sikh politics had ended. Shiromani Committee was formed to guide the Sikhs in their struggle for religious rights. Sunder Singh Majithia was chosen president and Sardar Sunder Singh Ramgarhia secretary of this committee., but both were replaced in a year's time. In political field also Chief Khalsa Diwan had outlived its utility and its failure to change with the times brought it under fire of severe criticism. Sunder Singh Majithia came to be seen as a self-seeking opportunist and a tool of the government.<sup>44</sup> Critics seemed to be proved right when the government, recognising the value of an influential ally, nominated Sunder Singh Majithia a member of the Executive Council. He immediately resigned from the Shiromani Committee.<sup>45</sup> S. G. P. C. had come into existence with the declared aim of gaining control over Gurdwaras and managing them. In this organisation there was no place for moderates. Leadership was captured by the extremists for whom "religious reform and extremist nationalism was identical" Baba Kharak Singh became the voice of the masses. Co-operators became non-co-

operators. Allies became bitter foes; Moderates gave place to extremists. One phase of Sikh struggle came to an end, only to give way to a strong tide of nationalist and religious fervour.

The Chief Khalsa Diwan leaders have sometime been criticised for their pro-Government approach. It is argued that Chief Khalsa Diwan was out of tune with the need of the hour. Its attitude, many a time, it is believed, was over-cautious, its leaders over-obsequious towards foreign rulers. But to belittle the role of Chief Khalsa Diwan in Sikh politics would not do justice to its leaders. Chief Khalsa Diwan was a product of its times and its role is to be judged in the context of the times in which it functioned. It cannot and should not be judged by the ardour of nationalism that grew rapidly after 1921. Its reaction to various political events should be seen in context of prevailing political scenario. Its loyalist approach can be interpreted as well conceived strategy for extracting maximum concessions for the Sikh community. It need not be taken as a sign of cowardice on the part of Chief Khalsa Diwan leadership. In adopting a loyalist approach Chief Khalsa Diwan was not alone. At this time Indians were novices in the art of politics. When in 1907, parts of Punjab were in the grip of a strong anti-government agitation, Chief Khalsa Diwan warned the Sikhs to be cautious and advised them to "avoid being seen as seditious". *Khalsa Samachar* went to the extent of declaring that Ajit Singh, one of the most prominent agitationist of 1907 struggle against Colonisation Bill was not a Sikh but was an Arya Samajist. Yet, Chief Khalsa Diwan's defensive posture should be seen in the context of prevailing political scenario. In the aftermath of 1907 agitation, the government had taken strong repressive measures. Ajit Singh and Lala Lajpat Rai had been deported. Government had become suspicious of other religious reform movements. All connected with Arya Samaj were being investigated. As a result many

prominent Aryas also met the Lt. Governor to convince the rulers that the Samaj was not a political body. These organisations were still in a nascent stage and had not struck deep roots. The government, with its vast resources could easily have crushed them. Hence this policy of denouncing the nationalists and pampering the government can be called one of self-preservation rather than cowardice.

The Diwan leaders adopted a similar defensive approach towards the Ghadar heroes. To begin with, the Chief Khalsa Diwan was sympathetic towards their Sikh brethren from far off places. But once the government had opened fire on these daring patriots, Chief Khalsa Diwan asked the Sikhs to "disassociate themselves from non-Sikhs". In the eyes of Chief Khalsa Diwan, Sikhism was synonymous with loyalty. When innocent Sikhs were massacred at Jallianwala Bagh, Chief Khalsa Diwan could only come out with mild criticism. When whole of India had taken up the cause of the Punjabies, their own Sikh leaders failed them. The defensive policy was successful till 1919, and Chief Khalsa Diwan leaders, inspite of some stray cases of veiled criticism remained the undisputed guiding spirit of the Sikh community. Yet this success of Chief Khalsa Diwan was purchased at a high price. The political temper in the country had started changing fast after World War I. The policies of Chief Khalsa Diwan towards British government had no place in that milieu. The leaders failed to realise the extent of their success in arousing the masses and themselves could not change. The Diwan's policy of increasing Sikh adherents by propagating the idea that the Sahajdharis are Sikhs also boomeranged when government appointed Harnam Singh, a clean shaven Sikh as council member. The Diwan leaders tried to regain lost ground in the leadership of Sikh community by harping on past achievements, but the attempt failed. It was soon overshadowed by more aggressive organisations.

Chief Khalsa Diwan's service to the Sikh community is invaluable. This was the period when the Sikhs themselves were not aware about their separate identity as a community. Chief Khalsa Diwan leaders were real Sikhs who had deliberately adopted a moderate stand towards the government which appeared to understand their need and value the distinct qualities of the Sikhs. This was the time when the imperialist government seemed to give concessions to communal identities and not to Indians as such. Like G. K. Gokhale said about INC (Indian National Congress). "we are, in the development of India, at that place, where our achievement would seem to be small and our failures big, but we have been destined to play that role only and we have achieved our aim—We have created public opinion and we have unified Indians.....when Congress was weak, moderates went to the government to present Indian interest and government was not apprehensive. When the plant nurtured by us, became a tree, Congress adopted agitational politics". This is an apt description of the moderate era of Congress and national movement. But if we merely substitute the words Sikh for India and Chief Khalsa Diwan in place of moderates, then these words would aptly sum up the achievements of the Chief Khalsa Diwan. The cohesive, strong, defiant religiously conscious and politically awakened to its rights and interests, Sikh community that has emerged now, can trace its roots to early years of this century. And in giving a definite shape to Sikh consciousness, Chief Khalsa Diwan has had a crucial role to play. For nearly two decades, in the formative years of communal and political history of Punjab, it held the centre stage. Its success is not as dramatic as of Akali movement, but at the same time its failure is not total. The role of Chief Khalsa Diwan is not limited to arresting the decay that was being "fostered by the inroads of Arya samaj and Christianity" or to "renewing the Sikh masses and restoring original

purity of their great religion".<sup>45</sup> Chief Khalsa Diwan's role is important in giving a distinct identity to Sikh community. As a result of Chief Khalsa Diwan's efforts, Sikhs were able to get government recognition for their distinct symbols, distinct language, distinct public holidays, separate places of worship and constitutional recognition as a distinct group. At a time when majority of the Sikhs themselves were not clear whether to regard their religion as distinct from Hinduism, it made the government recognise Sikhs as a separate community for electoral purposes. Chief Khalsa Diwan had achieved its aim of protecting a young sapling of distinct Sikh identity, nurturing it till it had taken roots and grown to maturity. The Chief Khalsa Diwan leaders brought Sikh politics to heights from which it could only go forward.

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## ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE SIKH EDUCATION CONFERENCE

AMRIT WALIA

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The Sikh Education Conference came into existence in the year 1908 to promote multiple objectives in the interest of the Sikh masses. In order to assess objectively, the achievements of the Sikh Education Conference, one has to take into consideration the deplorable condition of the Sikh Community before the foundation of the Conference. The education of the Sikhs was thrown into background during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The Sikhs had difficulty in adapting themselves to the circumstances accompanying the British Rule and fell behind in education and official employment<sup>1</sup> The Sikh population also began to dwindle. There was another challenge also confronting the Sikhs. A few high and low caste Sikhs were converted to Islam and Christianity and there was a fear that many more would follow suit. Above all, the Punjab witnessed the rising tide of another reform movement under the name of Arya Samaj. The Sikhs being educationally backward, began to play in the hands of the 'Arya Samajees'. They started criticising the Sikhs, their religion, their culture and their Gurus.<sup>2</sup> Under these circumstances the Sikh leaders began to feel the urgent need of a separate institution of their own for the purpose of safeguarding their religion and culture and retaining their individuality. Consequently, the intelligentsia of the

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community, under the stewardship of Sardar Sunder Singh Majithia, envisaged the scheme of setting up the Sikh Education Conference. It is significant to note that Sardar Majithia had got inspiration from Muhammadan Education Conference which was held at Karachi. The first session of the Sikh Education Conference was held at Gujranwala in April, 1908.

The Conference had certain definite aims and objectives before it. It wanted to foster love for knowledge and education among the youth. It aimed at enlightening the people and making the synthesis of the best of western education and the best of Indian education with religious flavour in it. Apart from stressing the importance of primary education, the Conference explored the defects and short comings of the Secondary, Collegiate and University education and aimed at its amelioration. The Conference was to reform the entire system of education, where foreign language should be replaced by the mother-tongue. Side by side with the education of the boys, the Conference wanted to lay special emphasis upon female education which was hitherto practically ignored.

Thus the first and foremost duty of the Education Conference was to promote education and free the people from the evils of illiteracy. It may be observed that the new system of education envisaged by the Conference was a well-rounded system with emphasis proportionately distributed between its various aspects. It laid as much emphasis on primary education as on higher education; as much on female education as on male education; as much on Sikh religion, Sikh history and Sikh tradition as on the new ideas from the West; as much on liberal education as on professional education; and as much learning of English as on learning of the mother-tongue.

With the above mentioned aims and objectives, Sikhs held more or less regular annual sessions and launched numerous schemes for achieving its programme. In the

course of four decades (1908-47) it achieved an impressive record of attainments to its credit and rendered indubitably yeoman's service for the cause of education.

In the first instance the Conference did a lot for the spread of primary education among the Sikhs. It rightly understood that the Primary education was the foundation on which the whole edifice was to be built and due to its earnest efforts a large number of primary schools were set-up rapidly almost like mushrooms. According to the report for the year 1914-15, there were no less than 49 primary schools connected with the Conference.<sup>3</sup> During the following year the number of the primary schools greatly increased so that the twelfth session of the Conference recorded the total number of the schools at 200. The Conference made the programme that there should be at least one primary school in every village. Such a target could not be easily achieved. Nevertheless the Sikhs were definitely leading in Primary education as compared with sister communities. The Chairman, Punjab Education Conference, paid a complement to the momentous work of the Conference in the field of Primary education in the following words :

The time has come when private bodies should pay more attention than they have done to the establishment of elementary schools, especially in rural areas. I am glad to say that in this respect the Sikhs are decidedly ahead of the other communities. I understand that more than 200 primary schools are maintained by the Sikhs and the number is increasing every year.<sup>4</sup>

The Conference also made some suggestion to the Government for improving Primary education to the effect that it should be made free so that it may become compulsory. In another resolution of the Conference it was suggested that the span of Primary education should be made of six years. It put such a demand that where ever primary education was made compulsory, two thirds

of the expenditure should be given out of the provincial revenues.

The Conference was much alive to the necessity of improving secondary education. In the first decade of the nineteenth century, it was felt by many that secondary education in the Punjab was speedily deteriorating. Efforts of the Conference were directed to promote secondary education and it opened many Khalsa Schools. The Director Education Department appreciated the venture of the Sikhs in these words : "The activity shown by Sikh Community in starting new Secondary Schools has been particularly noticeable in recent years and several such schools are qualifying for recognition."

By the year 1919, the number of the Sikh recognized schools had risen to 48. Even the strength of the students increased remarkably, which is clear from the Government Educational Report for the year 1918-19 which stated, "The Sikhs generally are also showing steady development. Their number in primary and secondary schools has increased by nearly 1600. The expenditure on these schools was about Rs. 12,000/- and the number of the teachers working in the schools was about 198."<sup>6</sup> The Conference attained a remarkable success in starting Khalsa Schools. The following words of the Lt. Governor of the province are a testimony to the flourishing condition of education among the Sikh Community :

I have been much struck on my return to the province after an absence of some years to see how generously the Sikh Community supports the cause of education. Wherever I go, I see Khalsa Schools almost all quite well-built and well-founded which have been provided by the liberality of the members of the Panth.<sup>7</sup>

The demand of the College education was in no way slackened. Khalsa College, Amritsar, had already been established in 1892.<sup>8</sup> It was a great source of intellectual

ferment for the Sikhs. The Conference opened more colleges and the number of the students advanced from 4221 to 4597<sup>9</sup>. These institutions remained the centre of intellectual and social activity of the whole Sikh Community for a pretty long time and acted as socio-cultural nuclei for emanicipation of the Sikh masses from superstitions and rituals. This removed illiteracy and ignorance and brought in an era of enlightenment in the minds of the people.

Realizing the inability of the students to go for higher studies, the Conference arranged stipends for them. Some of the distinguished Sikhs who got stipends were: Babu Anokh Singh, Diwan Surinder Nath and Sardar Ram Singh.<sup>10</sup> By these efforts and attainments of the Conference, most of the top positions in education, civil service, army and national leadership came to be occupied by the off-springs of these institutions.

The Lt. Governor of the province gave an undisputed testimony of what had been said in the following words :

As regards education, the Sikhs have for some time past, wisely recognized that by concentration of attention on education and organization for educational purpose alone, can they hope to fit their community to fill in the future that prominent position in the public life of the province to which they rightly aspire and their efforts to promote the spread of education, deserve praise of all.<sup>11</sup>

The Conference could not afford to ignore female education. Fully conversant with the fact that no community can make progress if their women are uneducated; the Conference, paid special attention towards female education. The very fact that during the sessions of the Conference many a times a Women's Conference was also held, is an evidence of the fact that the Sikh Educational Conference aimed at bringing the women at par with men, both educationally and socially.

According to the Census Report of the year 1911, after every 100 women only one was educated. But due to the efforts of the Conference many institutions for the female education were started in the province. By the year 1915, as many as 8 Kanya Middle Schools, 36 Kanya Primary Schools, 5 Boarding Houses and 1 widow *ashram* were established.<sup>12</sup>

It may be noted that in these female institutions special subjects were taught which could meet the requirements of the girls in their future careers; such as handwork, cooking, stitching etc. Arrangements were also made by the Conference for the training of the teachresses. J. V. and S. V. training classes were started in the Sikh Kanya Mahavidyala, Ferozepur. A huge Library was attached to the School. It was a singular achievement of Bhai Takhat Singh, who laboured hard for the education of the girls with the result, that great improvement was witnessed in the field of female education. *The Khalsa Advocate*, Amritsar, praised the service rendered by the Sikh teachresses in following words : "They have brought the girls groping in the darkness of illiteracy to new light."<sup>13</sup> In this way the Conference did a commendable service to the cause of the female education.

The Sikh Education Conference took special measures to bring Punjabi to that exalted position which it deserved. In almost every Session of the Conference, resolutions for the promotion of Punjabi were passed in one form or the other. The founders of the Conference thoroughly realised the defects of the education imparted in a foreign language. As a consequence students lost their originality and had to depend upon cram work. So the Conference decided to make Punjabi the medium of instruction in the educational institutions. To achieve this aim, the Conference resolved to urge upon the Punjab Government that Punjabi should be taught as a subject in primary, middle and high schools. It was also decided that a

demand should be placed before the Government to translate all the rules and regulations of 'Postal Guide' into Punjabi. As a result of the repeated requests of the Conference, the Punjab University, Lahore agreed to make Punjabi as an alternative vernacular along with Urdu and Hindi. In 1930's the medium of instruction was made Punjabi in Khalsa Schools. The Punjab Government was also requested to make Punjabi a court language in Judicial and Executive Courts, but this was rejected at the moment.

Punjab University, Lahore was requested to grant scholarship to the students studying Punjabi in Oriental College, Lahore as was the practice for Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian. It was also demanded that the salaries of the Punjabi teaching teachers should be increased, so that capable teachers might come to teach Punjabi. After a long discussion, the University authorities agreed to increase the scholarship but did not increase the grades of the teachers. The Conference also made efforts for producing literature in Punjabi. Sikh graduates were deputed for writing original books and translating standard English works into Punjabi, with the result many books like '*Padarth Vidya Bodh*', '*Shabad Birti Prakash*', '*Gurmat Sangeet*' and many other Punjabi books were published.<sup>14</sup>

From the fore-going account, it is evident that Punjabi made a remarkable progress in the firm hands of the Sikh intellectuals. Though Punjabi was not made a compulsory subject and also could not become a Court Language yet it was not a mean achievement that people started realising the place of their mother-tongue and took measures to make it a substitute for English and Urdu.

The Sikh Education Conference paid special attention towards religious education. It emphasised that religious training must proceed hand in hand with secular training. To begin with, the Conference started imparting religious instructions in the evening classes. Later on, text-books to

cover the scheme of studies in religious instruction for Khalsa Schools were prepared. At some places *Gurupurabs* were celebrated.

In boarding houses, Sikh students were allotted separate blocks which were under the direct supervision of the Sikh Superintendents, so that they might not indulge in any irreligious activity. To take a step further in this direction, the Conference requested the Punjab Government that a Bill prohibiting juvenile smoking and drinking should be passed and made a law so that the students studying in the schools or residing in the boarding houses may not suffer from this evil.<sup>15</sup>

Ultimately religious education became a part and parcel of the whole fabric of education of the entire Sikh community which kept both moral and morale of the Sikhs considerably high. The Lt. Governor of the Punjab writes in his Convocation Address : "In many towns throughout the province, I have been particularly struck with great sacrifices made by all Communities, especially Sikhs to found denominational schools in which besides secular knowledge religious training is also imparted."<sup>16</sup>

Promotion of technical education formed an important part of the Sikh Educational Conference. The growing problem of unemployment compelled the Conferene to make provisions for commercial, technical, agricultural and professional schools and colleges. The Principals of Training Colleges were requested to grant Sikh students some concessions for getting admission in the Training Colleges. On seeing that the number of the teachers coming from the training Colleges was very meagre, a J. A. V. Class for the Sikh students was started in 1919 in the Khalsa College, Amritsar. It was estimated that the problem of the teachers would be solved to a great extent by starting this class.

Some Sikh institutions started teaching craft, type-writing, short-hand and book-keeping etc. Some also



decided to start medical classes. A resolution was passed during the 13th session of the Conference to start classes for carpentry and craft in Khalsa High Schools. The resolution was sent to the managers of the Khalsa High Schools which was given a healthy response.

The Sikh Education Conference paid much attention towards the method of instruction which was rotten to the core. It was rigid, monotonous and insipid. The multiplicity of subjects proved to be very detrimental and impaired the general efficiency of our schools. The Conference, therefore, wanted to reconstruct the whole system of studies. The Conference created a proper attitude of mind towards education. It emphasized the fact that examinations are not the be-all and end-all of education.

To sum up, it can be said conveniently that the Conference laboured hard to achieve success in every aspect of education. But for the Sikh Education Conference, the Sikhs would have lagged behind the sister communities in the hectic race of education. It was due to the efforts of the Sikh Education Conference that they not only compared favourably well with other communities but also in certain respects marched much ahead of them. Alfred Margin Davis of Bishop's Stratford College, London, remarked, that "the educational system of the Sikhs was fully developed and the most broad-minded of any in the whole of India."

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## GANDHI, SIKHS AND NON-VIOLENCE

MOHINDER SINGH

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"I have nothing new to teach the world. Truth and non-violence are as old as the hills" said Gandhiji. While it is true that India has a long tradition of non-violence and peaceful co-existence what is new about Gandhiji's contribution is the fact that through his strict adherence to truth and non-violence during India's struggle for independence he was able to demonstrate the efficacy of this age-old weapon. The Mahatma succeeded not only in defeating the powerful British empire through sheer moral force of truth and non-violence but he also inspired various movements at home and abroad to use this weapon in their respective struggles.

Gandhi's first contact with the Sikhs and their non-violent struggle began during the tragedy of Nankana Sahib in which over 130 peaceful Akali reformers were butchered by Mahant Narain Dass and the mercenaries hired by him. Akali volunteers' strict adherence to non-violence even in the face of official repression so much impressed Gandhiji that in his writings and speeches he often quoted their example to other satyagrahis such as those of Mulshi Peta and Malegaon.

Nankana, being the birth place of Guru Nanak, occupies the most important position among the Sikh places of religious worship. Apart from the Gurdwara of Janam Asthan, where the Guru was born, there are over half a dozen other shrines connected with different events of the early life of the Guru. During the early decades of the twentieth

century the Gurdwara of Janam Asthan came to be controlled by Mahant Sadhu Ram, who was leading irreligious and licentious life. Mahant Narain Das, who succeeded to the Mahantship after the death of Sadhu Ram, followed his predecessor's pattern of life.

In the meantime, the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandak Committee was also considering ways and means to bring this important Gurdwara under Panthic control. The preparations of the Mahant were repeatedly discussed by the native press in the Panjab. As the Akali leadership did not want to depart from the policy of non-violence agreed upon earlier, they discouraged the extremist Jathas from attempting forcible occupation of Nankana which could lead to violence and bloodshed.

Bhai Lachhman Singh had started for Nankana late in the evening of 19 February, 1921 with a few companions. On the way more people joined him. On the morning of 20 February, the party reached a place half a mile away from Gurdwara Janam Asthan. Here they met a messenger of Bhai Dalip Singh and received a message containing the S.G.P.C.'s instructions not to proceed to Janam Asthan. Bhai Lachhman Singh agreed, but the other members of his Jatha persuaded him that there would be no harm if they visited the Gurdwara and, after paying their homage, returned peacefully. Having been thus persuaded by his companions, Bhai Lachhman Singh proceeded to the Janam Asthan and arrived there at the head of his Jatha at about six in the morning. He and his Jatha thus fell into the trap cleverly laid by Mahant Narain Das.

The arrival of such a large Jatha seems to have led the supporters of the Mahant to believe that the Akalis had come to forcibly occupy the Gurdwara of Janam Asthan. This news was conveyed to the Mahant who had boarded a train for Lahore to attend a meeting of the Mahants there. He thence gave up the planned journey, returned to Janam Asthan and alerted his men.

The Mahant seems to have acted according to a carefully

worked out plan. This is borne out by the fact that a few days earlier he had shifted his family and valuables to Lahore. According to an eyewitness account, on hearing the news of the arrival of the Jatha the Mahant distributed arms and ammunition to his men and exhorted them to action saying, 'Sikhs are coming, get ready'. As soon as the Jatha entered the main gate of the Gurdwara, the Pathans posted outside, shut the gate at a signal from the Mahant. The members of the Jatha, who were unaware of these designs, sat down after bowing before the holy Granth and started singing hymns. According to the statement of H. A. Herbert, the Public Prosecutor in the Nankana case, "Firing started almost as soon as the Akalis entered the Gurdwara. Not a single syllable was addressed to them; they were fired upon without parley or question.....' Immediately 25 of the Mahant's men went atop the roof of the verandah and started firing at the Akalis sitting below. The rest of the Mahant's men and Sadhus began throwing bricks at the Sikhs, some of whom ran to take shelter in the side-rooms. Others who ran to the side of the sanctuary were shot dead there. About 25 members of the Jatha who remained inside the Gurdwara calmly suffered martyrdom. About 60 of the Akalis shut themselves in another sanctuary called Chaukhandi but the Mahant's men broke open the doors and killed them there. Then the side-rooms were searched and 25 Akalis found there were put to death. According to contemporary accounts, Mahant Narain Das was himself supervising the whole show and urging his men 'to spare no long-haired Sikh in the whole vicinity.'

After wounding and killing all the members of Bhai Lachhman Singh's party and other Jathas along with their sympathisers, the Mahant and his men collected and burnt most of the dead and wounded by pouring kerosene which had already been stored for the purpose. According to an eyewitness account, 'In these burnt heaps there were traces of arms, heads, legs and other parts of bodies chopped off into small bits and practically the whole compound was full

of blood. The Public Prosecutor also confirms the fact that 'the Mahant tried to obliterate all traces of the killed by burning the corpses'. Lord Reading, the Viceroy of India, in his report to the Secretary of State for India, also refers to the Mahant's attempt to burn all the dead bodies.

The tragedy greatly perturbed the Sikhs in different parts of the country who vehemently condemned the action of the Mahant and sent message of sympathy for the Akali martyrs.

Mahatma Gandhi visited Nankana on 3 March to express his sympathy for the Akali Sikhs. In a Shahidi Diwan arranged on the same day, the Mahatma made a brief speech in Hindustani in the course of which he said that 'the news of Nankana was so staggering that he would not believe it without confirmation.' Condemning the cruel deed of the mahant and commending the Akalis for their passive sufferings, he described the martyrdom of the Akali reformers as an 'act of national bravery'. He also denounced the foreign Government whose rule, he said, 'was based on devilish tricks'. Later, in a message to the Sikhs in Lahore, while comparing the tragedy of Nankana to a similar one in April 1919 at the Jallianwala Bagh, Amritsar, the Mahatma said, "Everything I saw and heard points to a second edition of Dyerism, more barbarous, more calculated and more fiendish than the Dyerism of Jallianwala'.

The Mahatma felt that the peaceful Akali reformers had attained martyrdom not only to save their own faith but to save all religions from impurity. While Mahatma was convinced that peaceful sufferings and martyrdom of innocent reformers had provided great strength to the movement for Gurdwara reform, he advised them not to interpret this as a victory for the Sikhs alone but "dedicate this martyrdom to Bharatmata." Fully aware of the possibility that the British government would try to isolate the Sikhs from their countrymen, the Mahatma warned them not to fall in the trap of the bureaucracy and "to unite with the rest of the India to end this satanic system of Government"

Realising that even a small act of violence on the part of the Akali reformers could change the whole direction of the movement, Gandhi further exhorted the reformers to keep their Kirpans scrupulously sheathed and hatchets buried. "If you and I will prove worthy of the martyrs we will learn the lesson of humanity and suffering from them; and you will dedicate all your matchless bravery to the service of the country and her redemption", said Gandhi ji.

Later in a message to the Sikhs in Lahore the Mahatma described how Mahant Narain Das of Nankana had fortified the Gurdwara and hired professional criminals to attack the peaceful Akali reformers who visited the place on the early morning of February 20, 1921. This is what Mahatma Gandhi wrote in the *Young India* of March 16, 1921 :

"The temple presents the appearance of a fort. The walls of the rooms that surround the shrine are pierced to admit of shooting through them. The partition walls have connecting holes. The main door has massive steel plates evidently of recent make. The Granth Saheb bears bullet marks. The walls of the sanctuary and the pillars tell the same tale. The Akali party seem to have been treacherously admitted and the gates closed on them. Everything I saw and heard points to a second edition of Dyerism, more barbarous, more calculated and more fiendish than the Dyerism at Jallianwala. Man in Nankana, where once a snake is reported to have innocently spread its hood to shade the lamb-like Guru, turned Satan on that black Sunday."

While greatly appreciating the peaceful manner in which the Akali reformers conducted themselves in the face of provocation from the Mahant and suffered martyrdom without raising a single finger, the Mahatma observed "The Martyrs have shown courage and resignation of the highest order of which the Sikhs, India and the whole world have every reason to be proud."

Akali reformers' adherence to non-violence so much impressed the Mahatma that for quite some time the Nankana tragedy figured in his speeches and writings. While

addressing the satyagrahis of Mulshi Peta he said :

"I wish to see the bravery of Lachhman Singh and Dalip Singh in Mulshi Peta. Without raising a little finger, these two warriors stood undaunted against the attack of Mahant Naraindas of Nankana Sahib and let themselves be killed."

Similarly, the residents of Malegaon, who after being provoked by an S.I., killed him, were reminded "if these two brothers (Lachhman Singh and Dalip Singh) acted with great nobility at Nankana Sahib the residents of Malegaon had displayed an equal degree of heinousness"

The Mahatma exhorted the Akalis to offer non-co-operation in the matter of official enquiry into the Nankana Tragedy and consented to serve as chairman of the non-official Commission of Enquiry set up by the Central Sikh League. He further advised the Akalis to broaden the base of their struggle and reform the big Gurdwara', i.e., India, by joining the larger movement of non-co-operation launched by him. The Akalis accepted Mahatma Gandhi's advice and formally joined the nationalist struggle by officially adopting non-co-operation in their meeting held on May 5, 1921.

Gandhiji was able to convince his lieutenants in the Congress to support the Akali movement which to him offered a good opportunity to demonstrate the efficacy of his experiment of passive suffering. Under the new programme Akali struggle against a foreign Government became a synonym for reforming Sikh shrines. Akali agitation over the key's affair and later their struggle at Guru-ka-Bagh were two important manifestations of the non-violent nature of the Akali movement.

Mahatma Gandhi, who was watching the developments in Panjab with concern felt happy that the Akali reformers were offering strict non-co-operation to the bureaucracy in the province and pro-British elements among the Sikh community were being replaced by nationalist elements. This is how the Mahatma describes the developments.



"Sikh courage reaches greater heights every day and along with their courage grew their endurance and their spirit of non-violence. The government is now willing to return to the Gurdwara Prabhandhak Committee the keys of the Golden Temple of Amritsar which they had earlier taken possession of. But the committee has refused to accept them until the government agrees to release every Sikh leader who has been arrested. The government, therefore, is in a dilemma. If it releases the Sikhs, it will be ridiculed and the strength of the Sikhs will increase two-fold. If it does not release them, their strength will increase ten-fold. It must, therefore, decide whether it would be wiser for it, to allow the Sikhs' strength to increase ten times or release the Sikh prisoners and be laughed at, taking consolation in the fact that the strength of the Sikhs will then only be doubled."

A month later, Gandhi noted with satisfaction the secular dimension of the movement and in the same refrain he exuberated :

"The Sikh awakening seems to be truly wonderful. Not only has the Akali party become a part of effective non-violence but it is evolving a fine code of honour. The Gurdwara Committee is now insisting on the release of Pandit Dina Nath, a non-Sikh who was arrested in connection with the keys' affair."

Adoption of the Non-cooperation by the Akalis and their addition to the ranks of those already arrested in connection with the Khilafat agitation and Non-cooperation in Panjab greatly worried the Government. With a view to dissuading the Sikhs from joining the Non-cooperators the Government thought of adopting a conciliatory attitude towards the Akalis and suddenly announced its final withdrawal from the management of the Golden Temple and to hand over the keys to the President of the S.G.P.C. When, even after securing unconditional release of the Akali volunteers arrested in connection the Keys' affair, including Pandit Dina Nath, President of the District Congress Committee, Ajnala, the Akali leadership refused to collect the Keys, a gazetted

officer of the Panjab Government was deputed to deliver the keys to Baba Kharak Singh, President of the S.G.P.C. in a Diwan specially arranged for the purpose.

Unconditional release of the Akalis and return of the keys was viewed by the nationalist leaders in the country as a decisive victory for the forces of nationalism. Mahatma Gandhi who seems to have found in the Akali victory an echo of the success of Non-cooperation, sent the following telegram to Baba Kharak Singh, President of the S.G.P.C. :

First Battle for India's Freedom Won. Congratulations.

## ROLE OF BABBAR AKALIS IN FREEDOM STRUGGLE

GURCHARAN SINGH AULAKH

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The Babbar Akali Movement forms a very important part of the history of the Punjab as well as of the Sikhs. The contributions and the sacrifices of the Sikhs during the freedom movement launched against the British rulers occupy first and foremost place. In this context all the movements that were started in the Panjab such as Gurdwara Reform Movement, Babbar Akali Movement, (which were mainly religious in their conception and execution) Ghadar Movement (a spile over of the migrants in the U.S.A. and Canada who came to India in the wake of the first world war to free India from foreign yoke) Kirti Kisan Movement and Hindustan republican Army started and organised by S.Bhagat Singh, Chander Sekhar Azad and others played crucial role to create an awakening for the liberation of the country. Some of the movements (such as Akali Movement) were peaceful and non-violent whereas others like Babbar Akali Movement were violent and advocated the use of force for their objectives.

The Babbar Akali Movement was the outcome of the Akali Movement and was directed towards the attainment of independence. It was the by-product of the cumulative effect of the anger of the Sikhs against the British administration. The way in which the Panjab had been snatched from the Sikhs, the Kuka Movement was suppressed, Sardar Ajit Singh was deported for raising a voice against the increase of water-cess in canal colonies,

inhuman treatment meted out to the passengers of Koma-Gata-Maru and the interference of the British in the religious affairs of the Sikhs by helping the Mahants and blockading the Gurdwara Reform Movement was agitating the minds of the Sikhs. The Nankana tragedy and the atrocities perpetrated during the Guru Ka Bagh Morcha in the year 1921-22 aroused the ire of the Sikhs, in particular of those belonging to the Bist Jullundur Doab. They came out openly to punish those who, they believed, stood in the way of the Gurdwara Reform Movement.<sup>1</sup> The Babbar Akali Movement was, infact, a Sikh movement in its inception and was the direct outcome of that religious zeal and passion which was ebullient to see the Gurdwaras liberated as earlier as possible.<sup>2</sup> Thus, the Babbar Akali Movement was a radical outgrowth of the Akali Movement for the reform of the Sikh places of worship during the early 1920's. The latter, aiming to have the shrines released from the control of priests who had become lax and effete over the generations, was peaceful in character and strategy. In the course of the prolonged campaign, Akalis true to their vows patiently suffered physical injury and violence at the hands of the priests as well as of government authority. The incidents at Tarn Taran on January 25, 1921 and Nankana Sahib, (February 20, 1921) in which many Sikhs lost their lives led to the emergence of a group which rejected non-violence and adopted violence as a creed.<sup>3</sup> The poems of some prominent leaders of Babbar Jathas such as Kishan Singh Gargaj, Karam Singh Babbar and Nand Singh Ghorial are sufficient to show their faith in violent means and futility of passive resistance.<sup>4</sup> These Akalis who advocated the use of weapons in defiance of official Akali policy came to be called brave or Babbar Akalis. They followed the tradition laid down by Guru Gobind Singh and strongly believed that, 'When all other means have failed, it is lawful to have recourse to arms.' They were strongly attached to their faith and shared an intense patriotic fervour. They came out openly against the Government, made seditious speeches, threatened violent actions and became

'Chakarvartis' to avoid apprehension. Their targets were selfish Mahants, British officers and their Indian informers. Thus all those who were in the vanguard of the Sikh struggle for reform in Gurdwaras and liberation of the country by the use of weapons came to be called Babbar Akalis. Its activity was largely confined to Doaba Bist Jullundur and consequently the Babbar Akalis organised, operated and entrenched themselves there.

At the time of the Sikh Educational Conference at Hoshiarpur from March 25 to 27 (1921)<sup>5</sup> some radicals led by Master Mota Singh and Kishan Singh Gargaj, a retired Havildar Major of the Indian army, held a secret meeting and made up a plan to avenge themselves upon those responsible for the killing at Nanakana Sahib. Among those on their list were J.W. Bowring, the superintendent of police in the intelligence Department and C.M. King, the Commissioner. However, those assigned to the task fell into the police net on 23 May, 1921. Arrest warrants were issued against Master Mota Singh and Kishan Singh as well, but both of them went underground. In November 1921, Kishan Singh formed a secret organisation called Chakarvarti Jatha and started working among the peasantry and soldiers inciting them against the foreign rulers. While Master Mota Singh was arrested from his village on June 16, 1922, the Chakarvartis carried on their campaign against British rulers. Kishan Singh Gargaj and his band carried on their campaign in Jalandhar district with frequent incursions in the district of Ambala and states of Sangrur and Kapurthala. Karam Singh of Daulatpur organized a band of extremists in Hoshiarpur on similar lines. Towards the end of August 1922, the two jathas resolved to merge and renamed their organisation—Babbar Akali Jatha. A Committee was formed to work out a plan of action and collect arms and ammunition. Kishan Singh was chosen Jathedar or President, while Dalip Singh Gossal, Karam Singh Jhingan, Baba Santa Singh were appointed secretary, joint Secretary and Treasurer respectively. Another topmost leader S. Karam

Singh Daulatpur was authorised to bring out the Akhbar '*Babbar Akali Doaba*.' The formation of this single Jatha took place at Rajowal (Distt. Hoshiarpur) in the hermitage of sant Thakur Singh.

**Party and its programme :** Kisan Singh Gargaj was the chief architect of the movement and he enunciated the aims in his poems and letters published in '*Babbar Akali Doaba*', '*Babbarsher*', '*Panch*', and '*Garganj Akali*' etc. In his writings he suggested the British rulers that they should hand over the reins of the State which they had grabbed very unscrupulously.<sup>6</sup> He also exhorted the Sikhs to fight for the vindication of their religion and national honour and called them to go to scaffold but never to seek forgiveness. When atrocities were committed by the British administration during '*Guru Ka Bagh Morcha*', The Sikhs were urged to take up the gauntlet.<sup>7</sup> To the Babbar Akalis, the reform of the Gurdwaras was not a secluded issue. It was a part of the freedom struggle.

The Babbar Akalis sought to establish contact with soldiers serving in the army as well as students in schools. The party was also aware of the informers. Consequently it took decision on December 25, 1922 to reform the stooges and lackeys of the British. S. Karam Singh Daulatpur and Bhai Udey Singh were entrusted with the task of organising a squad to reform the toadies in Hoshiarpur district. Kisan Singh Gargaj took upon himself the duty of preparing a list of *jholichucks* (toadies) in Jullundur area. At that time there was not much of distinction between Akalis and Babbar Akalis. The Babbars were in fact, a militant group of Akalis. The Babbars were popular in Doaba. Perhaps, due to this reason the number of Babbar Akalis was considered very large.<sup>8</sup> But the number of the Committed Babbar Akalis did not exceed five hundred or so. The outer circle of the jatha consisted of sympathisers who helped the active members with food and shelter. Some ran errands for the leaders carrying messages from one place to another, others arranged *diwans* in advance for itinerant speakers and

distributed Babbar Akalis leaflets.

In order to evade the police and keep their activities secret, the Babbar Akalis Jatha also evolved a secret code like the Sikhs of 18th century who were engaged in life and death struggle against the Mughals. The Babbar Akalis decided to follow the policy of often confrontation. Every member was asked to murder a *jholichuk*, anyone deserting the Jatha turning approver or working as a C.I.D agent would be shot dead.<sup>9</sup> The movement was at its peak from mid 1922 to the end of 1923. Several government officials and supporters were singled out and killed. Some of the killed were Bishan Singh Zaildar of Rani Thua (February 10, 1923), Diwan of Hayatpur (Feb. 13, 1923), Buta Singh Lambardar of Nangal (March 10, 1923), Labh Singh of Garshakar (March 19, 1923), Genda Singh Subedar of Ghuriah (April 17, 1923), Ralla and Dittu of Kaulgarh (May 20, 1923), Atta Muhammad Patwari (June 6, 1923).

On the other hand the government took stern measures and issued proclamations announcing the awards for the arrest of Babbar Akalis on November 30, 1922, April 25, 1923 and August 3, 1923. With the assistance of *jholichucks* some Babbars were nabbed but the ire of Babbars did not diminish, Consequently the government of India was grilled for its laxity in British Parliament. The members of the Parliament like Sir Charles Yates, St. Colonel Howard and Hope Simpson gave the government many an anxious moments. Colonel Yates even urged the government to merge the Doaba with some native state if the government was unable to put down the Babbar terrorists.

Then the government acted with firmness and alacrity. Units of cavalry and infantry were stationed at strategic points in the resiture areas, with magistrates on duty with them. A joint force of military and special police was created to seize Babbars. Every two weeks propaganda leaflets were dropped from aeroplanes with a view to strengthening the morale of the loyalists. Punituree police-post tax was levied and disciplinary action was taken against Civil and military

pensioners sympathising with the Babbar Akalis. Consequently the Babbars, boldly encountered with the police and performed some rare feats of daring and self-sacrifice. Among these exploits, first in the series was the Baketi carnage on August 31, 1923 in which Karam Singh Editor, Udey Singh, Bishan Singh and Mohinder Singh were killed due to the betrayal of Anup Singh Manko. Mannahana Episode took place due to the perfidy of another toady Jawala Singh in which Dhanna Singh Behbalpur exploded a hand grenade leading to the death of nine policemen including A.F. Harton S.P., W.H.P. Jenkins (They were wounded but died subsequently) as well as Dhanna Singh. The last of the encounters took place in Syallpur on June 8, 1924 when Waryam Singh Dhugga was run down by the police. Then the movement virtually came to an end.<sup>10</sup> There were casual actions here and there but force was spent and fire was extinguished, only smoke was visible.

The story of Babbar Akalis is bound to remain incomplete without a narration of Babbar Akalis conspiracy case. Many a Babbars were arrested and tried. In the main and supplementary case there were 133 criminals, of whom 6 (Kishan Singh Gargaj, Nand Singh Ghurial, Dalipa Dhamian, Karam Singh Haripur, Santa Singh Chhoti Herion and Dharam Hayatpur) were hanged on 27th February 1926. In Babbar supplementary case 1132 persons were tried and 6 of them (Banta Singh Gurusar Satlani, Gujjar Singh Dhapai, Merkand Singh Jassowal, Nickka Singh of Gill, Sunder Singh Lohke) were sent to the gallows on February 17, 1927.

The Babbar Akalis Jatha ceased to exist, but it had left a permanent mark on the history of the Sikhs and on the nationalist movement in India. Though the movement was short-lived, yet its impact is legendary. It left a deep imprint not only on the contemporary politics but also on the successive movements. The effect of the movement has permeated into the political, social and literary climate of this region in recent times.

The role of Babbar Akalis on the Akalis Movement or



the Gurdwara reform movement cannot be underestimated. It was the sacrifice of the Babbar Akalis that compelled the British government to come to terms with 5.6 P.C. in 1923 as well as 1925. Master Tara Singh throws light on this. The government, through Mr. Dunnet D.C. Amritsar, approached Akali leaders to denounce Babbar Akalis and that helped the Government to find out way for releasing 5000 Akalis arrested during Guru Ka Bagh Morcha.<sup>11</sup>

This movement also left its mark on all redical groups. The Naujawan Bharat Sabha and Kirti Kisan Movements in the Panjab owned their militant policy and tactics to the Babbar Movement. The Babbar ideals of selflessness, patriotism and rare heroic sacrifices influenced Bhagat Singh. It may be futile to understand his revolutionary activities without considering the impact of the Babbar Akalis Movement. He is considered a product of that Movement.<sup>12</sup> The role of the Babbar Akalis movement in the genesis of the Raiyasti Parja Mandal is also apparent.<sup>13</sup> The role of Babbar Akalis Movement on Panjab history during the last 80 years is unquestionable. It influenced the actions of Babbars of Malwa who killed S.G.M. Beaty at Chatha Sekhman in 1940. It also fanned the fire of patriotism in Udham Singh who shot dead Sir Michael O, Dwyer in London on March 13, 1940. Thus, the Babbar Akali Movement had left its deep imprint not only on Sikh politics, Literature but also on our National Movement. Its role is unique and memorable in the annals of History.

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## THE ROLE OF THE SIKHS IN THE NATIONAL FREEDOM STRUGGLE

JAGJIWAN MOHAN WALIA

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The Sikhs played a prominent role in throwing off the British yoke. The struggle which commences with sporadic and spontaneous risings against the British rule, gradually assumed the shape of a national movement with the objective of obtaining independence.

Even in 1845, the army of the Lahore Durbar Marched against the British forces chanting 'on the throne of Delhi would sit the army of the Guru.' Unlike the commanders who were treacherous, the Sikh soldiery inspired by lofty religious and national ideals were ready to sacrifice their lives for the glory of the Khalsa. During the second Anglo-Sikh War, Dewan Mulraj of Multan marched against the troops of Rajas Sher Singh and Chattar Singh only after auspicious hour was fixed by Bhai Maharaj Singh. The latter egged on Rajas Sher Singh and Chattar Singh not to surrender to the British after the defeat by British forces. The result was that the Punjab was annexed to the British Dominions in March 1849.

After annexation, the Punjab was placed under a new administration. There is a general belief that the Sikhs set aside hostile feelings within a few years of the annexation and quickly adjusted themselves in the new order.

This was due to the fact that the Sikhs detested the

*Poorbia* soldiers due to their role in destroying the independence of the kingdom of the Punjab in 1845-46 and ultimate subjugation of the Punjab in 1848-49. "The *Poorbia* sepoy," writes Dr. Ganda Singh, "as the soldiers of the Bengal army were then, and are still, called in the Punjab, had not the moral courage to approach the Sikhs for co-operation and assistance against the British as they had themselves helped the British to destroy the independent kingdom of the Punjab in 1845-46 and reduce it to British subjection in 1848-49. As such, there was not much love lost between the *Poorbia* sepoy and the people of the Punjab. The offensive airs of the *Poorbia* garrison in the Punjab had been particularly galling to the martial Sikhs."<sup>1</sup> The detestable attitude of the *Poorbia* soldiers deeply hurt the feelings of the Sikhs and this hatred could not be overcome within the short period.

The Sikhs assistance to the British has been misinterpreted. The fact is that the Punjab including the Sikhs looked to the British Government with distrust and resentment. As the whole population of the Punjab was disarmed, they could not defend themselves. Many of the Sikh Sardars who fought against the British were in prisons and many of them lived humbly. The *jagirs* of the *jagirdars* had been considerably decreased. After the disbanding of the Khalsa Army, a large number of the former soldiers began to cultivate the land. The reduction in the land revenue did not improve the condition of the peasantry as the Government laid stress on payment in cash. The fall in prices caused the reduction in profit from good harvests. Under the prevailing conditions, it was impossible to pay the land revenue in cash though the reduction was made several times. The social reforms introduced by the state greatly hurt the religious feelings of the Hindus and the Sikhs. The schools and colleges set up by the Government were suspected to be the agencies to convert people to Christianity. The Sikhs and Hindus viewed with distrust the proselytising activities of the Christian missionaries.

Maharaja Dalip Singh was the most conspicuous convert.

The sepoys of the Bengal army of the East India Company rose in revolt in 1857. As they had been instrumental to conquer the Punjab and also as they formed a greater part of the army of occupation they were the objects of hatred. The Mughal Emperor's appeals did not appeal to the Sikhs as the Mughals persecuted the Sikhs as well as the Hindus alike. From Parliamentary Paper No. 238 of 1859, it is evident that the Sikhs envisaged the restoration of the Sikh kingdom. It expresses the apprehensions of the authorities in unequivocal terms, "Universal revolt in the Punjab would have broken out if Delhi had not fallen soon into our hands." In the papers, it is mentioned that as detachment after detachment was moving towards Delhi from Punjab and cantonment after cantonment was being vacated, "then Punjabis realised how isolated they were from the rest of India. Then their minds passed from confidence to doubt, then to mistrust and then to disaffection. The last symptom had begun to appear when Delhi fell."<sup>2</sup> As early as 18th May, 1857, John Lawrence was apprehensive of an uprising in the Punjab. He had once demurred, "I recollected their (Sikhs) strong nationality how completely they were demoralized for some twelve years before annexation, and how much they have to gain by our ruin."<sup>3</sup>

The intrepid Khalsa who had fought so bravely against the Mughals and stemmed the tide of the Durrani invasions, would not have failed to take the field against the British if they had understood the significance of the uprising. There was peace and prosperity in the territory due to the settled Government of the British. They had not yet fully realized the British yoke when the Mutiny of 1857 broke out. Had the mutiny broken out few years later, the daring Khalsa would have taken the field against the British. Moreover, Maharaja Dalip Singh was loath to take any action against the British. About, the Maharaja, Sir John Login wrote from castle Menzies in England on September 30, 1857, "the Maharaja has certainly no sympathy with the mutinous

sepoys, nor any other wish than that we should effectually put them down—his feelings in our favour are of so strong as to overcome his natural indolence, or to tempt him to read to make many inquiries on the subject of the revolt.”<sup>4</sup> Moreover after the outbreak in India, “the Maharaja’s return to India had been put a stop to and he remained in England more for necessity than choice.”<sup>5</sup>

Despite the Government’s vigilance and repression, there were sporadic risings of the Sikhs. Many Sikh soldiers were hanged on the charge of seditious activities. At Ropar, Mohar Singh declared the end of the British rule, banned the cow-slaughter and proclaimed Khalsa Raj. He and his accomplices were hanged. At Sialkot, to quote the Parliamentary paper 239 of 1859, “Even the Punjabi military police magazines blown up. The villagers of the neighbourhood also revolted and entered the city. Many village leaders were executed and about fifty of the villagers were flogged.”<sup>6</sup>

On the whole, the Punjab remained peaceful. The rulers of the Cis-Sutlej Sikh states helped the British to suppress the revolt. They and all other Sikh leaders who rendered assistance were awarded titles and addition to their territorial possessions. Gordon has rightly observed, “Though the Khalsa has ceased to be a political power, it has entwined its military force with strong chord of loyalty and sympathy for the British Crown.”<sup>7</sup>

About sixty years prior to the Non-co-operation Movement of Mahatma Gandhi, Guru Ram Singh of the Kukas launched the non-co-operation movement against the British Government. He fully realised that in order to oust the British, it was necessary to boycott the British manufactures as this could cause loss to the British. Giani Pritam Singh is of a view that he was the greatest Sikh reformer after the extinction of the Sikh kingdom.<sup>8</sup> As the atmosphere of intrigues and counter-intrigues after the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh was repulsive to him, Baba Ram Singh left the service in the Lahore Army in 1845 and devoted

himself to religious activities with a view to reform Sikhs. After the annexation, the zealous religious propagation of the Christian missionaries and the establishment of a string of slaughter houses for the supply of beef which were banned during the Sikh regime greatly hurt the feelings of the Punjabi Sikhs and Hindus and brought home to them the loss suffered by the Punjabi's after annexation.

Baba Ram Singh laid the foundation of the Kuka Sect in 1857. In the first instance, the organisation was termed as the Sant Khalsa in order to distinguish it from other Sikhs. He asked his followers to lead pure and clean lives, avoid eating meat and drinking and to renounce such social customs as female infanticide, child marriage, etc. He laid stress on morality. Ghulam Bheekh writes, "One would have found any wicked person among the Kukas very rarely."<sup>9</sup> Kinchant writes about the religious beliefs of the Kukas. "Any person irrespective of caste or religion can be admitted a convert. Sodhis, Bedis, Mahants, Brahmans and such like are imposters, as none are Gurus except Gobind Singh. Devi Dwaras, Shib Dwaras and Mandir are a means of extortion to be held in contempt and never visited. Idols and idolworship are insulting to God and will not be forgiven."<sup>10</sup>

He imparted military training to his followers. they boycotted the courts setup by the British and established the Panchayats to settle the disputes. He enjoined upon his followers to wear the hand spun cloth and discard the British goods. As a parallel to the British postal system the Kukas established their own postal system. They boycotted the schools set up by the British and sent their children to the indigenous schools where they were educated in mother-tongue. Ghulam Bheekh writes that during the lifetime of Baba Ram Singh several lakhs of people joined the Kuka-fold.<sup>11</sup>

Baba Ram Singh established contact with the rulers of states outside Punjab and Russia with a view to expel the British from the Punjab. Shiv Lal writes, "In order to make his political programme a success, Guru Ram Singh had

spread his sphere of activity in the border states of Nepal, Bhutan and Kashmir. Contacts were made with the rulers through Namdhari embassies. Guru Ram Singh is also stated to have had close contacts with the Rani of Jhansi and other leaders of the 1857 rebellion. The Guru, even from jail exchanged letters with Russia through the governor of Russian Turkistan."<sup>12</sup>

Due to the growing popularity of the Kukas, the British, Government imposed many restrictions upon Baba Ram Singh and his followers. The Baba was detained in his village Bhaini. The restrictions raised the morale of the Kukas and they became the sworn enemies of the British. The British Government removed all restrictions in 1867.

After the removal of all restrictions, the Kukas intensified the activities. They murdered some butchers of Amritsar and Raikot in 1871. In the Amritsar case, four Kukas were executed and two were sentenced to transportation for life. In the Raikot case, four Kukas were executed. A few months later, the Kukas raided Maloud and Malerkotla with a view to obtain weapons. Seventy-five Kukas were blown off from the mouths of cannon, one was hacked to pieces and two were transported for life. Bhaini, the headquarters of Kukas, was kept under police surveillance. Most of the Kukas were exiled. Baba Ram Singh was exiled to Burma where he died in 1885. The Baba sent emissaries to seek assistance from the rulers of Kashmir and Nepal against the British. Due to the weakness of these rulers, his attempts proved abortive. After 1872, Kuka Suba went to Central Asia several times and tried to persuade Russia to attack India and turn out the British. During the eighties of the last century, Maharaja Dalip Singh visited Moscow. This fact and the prevalence of certain prophecies among the Kukas raised the hopes of the Kukas. Budh Singh, younger brother of Baba Ram Singh, was primarily responsible for the renewed activity of the Khalsa. Fauja Singh writes, "Due to the factors such as liberal elite and landed aristocracy to the British and the vigilance of the Government, the movement once again



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failed to make any appreciable mark."<sup>13</sup>

In an article, Rajindra Prasad, the late President of India, maintained, "Guru Ram Singh considered political freedom a part of religion. The organisation of the Namdharis became very strong. The principles of boycott and non-co-operation, which Mahatma Gandhi introduced so vigorously in our freedom movement were expounded by Guru Ram Singh for the Namdharis.<sup>14</sup> The Guru not only aimed at the moral uplift of his followers, but also laid stress on the attainment of political freedom.

After the Kuka movement, the Singh Sabha movement was launched by the liberal sections of the Sikh community with a view to effect reforms in the Sikh beliefs and practices. The new educational system was introduced to effect social and religious reforms. This movement enjoyed the patronage of the British Government. The leaders of the movement, who belonged to the upper classes of the English educated intelligentsia, did not like to join any national activity. This movement made the Sikhs a self-conscious community ready to sacrifice for the righteous course.

The socio-religious reforms movements of the last quarter of the nineteenth century paved the way for militant national activity. As a result of cultural revolution, a powerful educated middle class emerged in the Punjab who were greatly influenced by the Russian defeat at the hands of Japan and the partition of Bengal. They were also affected by the vast quantity of patriotic literature produced during the period.

After alienating the money-lenders and traders by the Land Alienation Act, 1901, the Punjab Government increased the irrigation rates in the Bari Doab Canal Colonies in order to secure the so-called legitimate share of increase in the produce of cotton and sugarcane due to improved irrigational facilities. By the end of 1906, the Punjab Government resolved to curtail the rights of the cultivators in order to reduce them to the position of tenants. This resulted in a popular agrarian unrest. In early 1907, public

meetings were held at Lahore, Rawalpindi, Amritsar, Gurdaspur and Lyallpur to express public resentment to the official Bill which was introduced by the Government to effect changes. Sardar Ajit Singh and Lala Lajpat Rai advocated the cause of the peasants. Sardar Ajit Singh, a fiery orator, called upon three hundred million Indians to turn out hundred and fifty thousand Englishmen from India. Banke Dyal's song '*Pagri Sambhal Jatta*' inculcated self-respect in the Punjab peasant. Due to the persecution, and closure of the news paper '*The Punjabee*' and the threatened increase of revenue of twenty-five per cent, the movement gained momentum. At Rawalpindi, Ajit Singh urged the cultivators not to pay the increased tax and cultivate land. Lala Hans Raj the president of the meeting thinking that Ajit Singh by his provocative speech was inciting violence tried to stop him. Feeling insulted, Ajit Singh left the meeting at once. Three lawyers, the President, Gurdas Ram and Amolak Ram were prosecuted for propagating sedition and were imprisoned. On the 2nd May, a complete *hartal* was observed and people gathered in the compound of the district courts of Rawalpindi. The Magistrate refused to stop the proceedings. The crowd indulged in violence, broke the furniture of the court and burnt the houses of the European officers. The repressive policy of the government caused resentment in the province. A very important party '*Anjuman-i-Mahaban-i-Watan*' popularly known as Bharat Mata Society was formed with Ajit Singh, Sufi Amba Prasad and Lal Chand Falak as its important members. They inculcated the spirit of nationalism through press and platform.

As there was the close liaison between the peasant and the soldier, the peasant disaffection spread into the army. The celebration of the Golden Jubilee of the revolt of 1857 and the sympathies of the Sikh infantry with the discontented made the Government apprehensive of a popular revolt. Lala Lajpat Rai and Ajit Singh were deported. Due to the repression of the Government and the vote of the

Colonisation Bill by the Governor-General, the movement abated. The Tilak Press Hoshiarpur was raided by police and secret literature was captured by the Government.

In order to earn their livelihood, the Punjab peasants migrated to far and near countries of Asia and America, where they settled as cultivators and labourers. A large number of the settlers were Sikhs. After few years of this settlement, the Canadian and American authorities became apprehensive of the adverse economic and social effect of these foreigners on their own countries. The Punjabis had to suffer great hardships at the hands of the natives. The discriminatory attitude of the local Government and refusal of the Indian Government to help them, forced them to organise themselves. Ajit Singh along with others was instrumental in the formation of the Ghadar party to liberate their motherland from foreign rule.

In 1913, the Ghadar Party came into existence at Astoria (Oregon) under the banner of the Hindustani Workers of the Pacific Coast with Baba Sohan Singh Bhakna as its President and Bhai Kesar Singh as Vice President. Lala Hardayal, Lala Thakur Dass of Dhuri and Pandit Kashi Ram were elected as General Secretary, Under Secretary and Treasurer respectively. Kartar Singh Sarabha and Baba Kartar Singh Latala also attended the meeting and offered themselves as volunteers to work for the emancipation of their motherland. In the executive committee, there were Santokh Singh, Kartar Singh Cheema, Basakha Singh, Munshi Ram and Harnam Singh who incited the Indians to rebellion and throw off the foreign yoke. The headquarters of the party were shifted to San Francisco where a journal *Ghadar* was brought out in Urdu, Punjabi and Gujrati. The headquarters of the Ghadar party published important pamphlets like *Ghadar di Goonj*, *Ilan-i-Jang*, *Naya Zamana* and the *Balance Sheet of the British Rule in India*. The first issue of the *Ghadar*, dated November 1913, stated in following unequivocal terms its aims and objects.<sup>15</sup>

"Today there begins in foreign lands, but in our country

language a war against the British Raj. What is our name? Ghadar, What is our work? Ghadar, Where will Ghadar break out? In India."

Kartar Singh Sarabha and Raghubar Dayal worked as his assistants. Sarabha used to translate the Ghadar newspaper into Punjabi. Harnam Singh Tundilat of village Kotla Nodh Singh, Kartar Singh Latala and Hari Singh Usman were in the editorial board of the newspaper besides others. When Hardayal went to Germany, his place as editor was assumed by Bhagwan Singh.

Lala Hardayal edited *The Ghadar* whose main aim was to incite the Indians to rebellion. As the President of the Ghadar Party, Sohan Singh looked after the entire work of the party. "Presidentship", writes Sohan Singh Josh, "Placed enormous responsibilities on Sohan Singh. He devoted his entire time and attention towards organising the party. He would sometimes go to Indian settlements on foot, explain to them the programmes of the Ghadar Party, enrol new members and raise funds for the party papers. While going out he would always keep two or three party members with him. As a result of the work of the party and the paper, Indians were so much enthusiastic that they would not only give the contributions demanded but even considered themselves be entirely at the disposal of the party."<sup>16</sup> Preparations for going to India and organising revolt there to throw off the British yoke were made after 12th April, 1914. Sohan Singh, took active part in these meetings. In every meeting, the Government of India was condemned for its callousness, indifference and lack of any help. In the speeches of Sohan Singh, special mention was made of the demolition of the mosque of Kanpur, of razing to the ground the wall of Gurdwara Rakib Ganj, government occupation of Khalsa College, Hindu-Muslim Unity, the injustice done to the passengers of the Komagata Maru and Indians were urged to return to India and liberate their motherland.

In 1914 occurred the famous tragedy of the Komagata Maru. In order to check the migration of Indians into Canada,

the authorities of that country banned the entry of all the emigrants who did not possess £ 200 and who did not journey continuously to Canada. There was no direct ship service from India to Canada in those days. The new ordinances practically stopped the movement of Indian emigrants to Canada. Baba Gurdit Singh, who belonged to village Sarhali in District Amritsar, was at that time a respectable and enterprising contractor at Singapore. The Komagata Maru (ship) was hired at a large amount from a Japanese firm so that both the conditions of the Canadian Government taking of direct ship and purchasing direct tickets could be fulfilled. Baba Gurdit Singh sailed to Canada with 376 persons. All the passengers belonged to Punjab with the exception of a few. The ship which left Hongkong on the 4th April, 1914 for Canada reached Vancouver on 22nd May. The ship was not allowed to the shore and the passengers were not allowed to land except the domiciles of Canada. The Canadian authorities at Vancouver threatened the Baba to impound his ship in case of non-payment of the charters fee. He could not pay till he fulfilled his contract with the passengers. A case was fought for bringing the ship to the shore and allowing the passengers to land. The case was decided against the Indian passengers. Chief Justice M.C. Donald wrote in his judgement, "Canada has the inalienable right to place restriction on the entry of citizens of other countries."<sup>17</sup>

On 23rd July, 1914, the Komagata Maru was forced to return to India. The Ghadar Party in Canada had played a dominant role in providing every facility to the passengers and struggled hard to get them landed on the shore. The Ghadar Party in America helped them with money. Special numbers of the newspaper *Ghadar* were published on the occasion and the ghadrites contributed to pay the full passage of the ship. The passengers in the ship were regularly supplied with the copies of *the Ghadar*, *Ghadar di Gunj* and *Ghadar Sandesh*.

In accordance with the instructions from the Ghadar

Party, Sohan Singh contacted the passengers of the Komagata Maru at Yokohima and explained to them all the aspects of the party's programme in order to break out the revolt in India.

The passengers of the Komagata Maru (Ship) were not allowed to land either at Hongkong or at Singapore. After a long journey, the ship finally reached the Budge Budge Harbour at Calcutta on the 26th September, 1914. Due to the out break of the First World War, their entry into India was banned by an ordinance. Special arrangements were made to convey the passengers from Calcutta to Punjab. As a result of the conflict with the police 20 Sikhs were killed and 22 were wounded. Gurdit Singh with his twenty-eight companions effected his escape.

The treatment meted out to the Komagata Maru passengers at Vancouver and Budge Budge Ghat gave a fillip to the Ghadar Movement abroad. Sir Michael O'Dwyer writes, "It gave a powerful stimulus to the propaganda already at work among them."<sup>18</sup> Regarding the effect of this tragedy on the Ghadar movement, the Indian Sedition Committee maintains, "It inspired some Sikhs of the Punjab with the idea that the Government was biased against them. It strengthened the hands of the Ghadar revolutionaries who were urging Sikhs abroad to return to India and join the mutiny, which they asserted, was about to begin. Number of emigrants listened to such calls and hastened back to India from Canada, the United States, the Philipines Hong Kong and China."<sup>19</sup>

After the Komagata Maru tragedy the Ghadarites gave call to the Punjabis settled in the U.S.A., Canada and South-East Asia to move quickly to India to emancipate their motherland from foreign yoke. The first group of the Ghadriles left San Francisco for India in August 1914 by the ship 'Korea'. Addressing them, Ram Chandra said, "Your duty is clear, Go to India, stir up rebellion in every corner of the country. Rob the wealthy and show mercy to the poor. In this way gain universal sympathy. Arms will be provided

for you on arrival in India. Failing this you must ransack police stations for rifles. Obey without hesitation the command of leaders."<sup>20</sup>

On arriving at Calcutta, the Government came to know of their plans and arrested all the leaders including Jawala Singh. Of all the ships which brought Ghadriles to India, Tosa Maru is the most important. There were about three hundred persons aboard it. Sohan Singh Bhakna boarded the ship Namnsang which reached Calcutta from Penang. Sohan Singh was arrested, brought to Calcutta Jail and subsequently to jail at Ludhiana. Sohan Singh was transferred to Multan Jail.

Kartar Singh Sarabha, a Ghadrile, went fearlessly to army units and propagated his revolutionary views to the soldiers without caring for the risk. His daring would have a powerful impact and wherever he went, his words were heeded. Due to the great vigilance of the Government, the activities of the Ghadriles proved abortive. But they opened factories at Amritsar and Lahore to manufacture bombs.

The main aim of the Ghadriles was to incite the troops to rebellion. They established cells in almost all the cantonments of the Punjab in a very short time. But the Government was intimated about the plans of the Ghadriles through their agents. Acting promptly, the Government arrested the Ghadriles, sentenced eighteen of them to death, out of whom twelve were hanged. The Ghadriles could not succeed due to the repressive measures of the Government. The defence of India act vested special powers in the Government. There were the summary trials of the accused in the Lahore Conspiracy Cases. Out of them 46 were sentenced to death, 194 were transported for life, 93 were sentenced to varying terms and only 42 were released.

On the 16th November, 1915 seven brave Ghadriles were executed, Kartar Singh Sarabha (Ludhiana), Bhai Bakhshish Singh Gilwali (Amritsar), Bhai Surain Singh son of Ishar Singh Gilwali (Amritsar), Harnam Singh Bhatti, Goraya (Sialkot) and Shri Vishnu Ganesh Pingle (Poona) were

executed. They embraced death smilingly. The Ghadrates who were imprisoned, were tortured in jails. "There hardly was a patriot", writes Sohan Singh Josh, "who was not given punishments like fetters, bar-fetters, hand cuffs, "kohlu" and solitary confinement in a cage. Sohan Singh had to undergo all these punishments in turn. Due to these tortures, two of the patriots, young Bhai Bhan Singh Sunet and Bhai Rulia Singh Sarabha fell martyrs in the jail."<sup>21</sup>

Though the large number of the Ghadrates were the Sikhs, yet they did nothing for the revival of Sikhism. "The eruption of the Ghadar movement," writes Khushwant Singh, "brought about a radical change in the political outlook of the Sikh community. It marked the beginning of the end of three quarters of a century of unquestioned loyalty to the British Raj. Though the rebellion was suppressed and submerged in the enthusiasm generated by the war, it continued to foment and erupted a few years later during the Akali agitation. The Babbars were largely recreated from the ranks of the Ghadar party."<sup>22</sup>

About four lakh Punjabis fought as soldiers during the First World War. After the War, the Punjabis demanded their legitimate rights, but the Government gave them high sounding tributes and a few glittering medals. The prices rose enormously during the War and fall in prices after the War was expected. As a result there were strikes and blackouts. The outbreak of plague, influenza and famine increased the misery of the people. Moreover, the policy of Michael O'Dwyer, the Lieutenant Governor of Punjab of setting the aristocracy against the middle classes estranged the latter.

About this time the Rikab Ganj Morcha in New Delhi was launched by the Sikhs against the Government of India. The outer wall of Rikab Ganj Gurdwara had been demolished by the Government as early as 1912 and some land belonging to the Gurdwara had been usurped by the Government to build a new capital. This greatly enraged the Sikhs but as the Great War broke out they remained quiet for some time.



In 1918, they again started agitation over the demolished wall. The Government tried to placate the Sikhs. The demolished wall of the Rikab Ganj was rebuilt, and the acquired land was handed over to the Sikhs. They were exempted from the operation of the arms act and were allowed to wear *kirpans*. The Sikh prisoners were permitted to upkeep their religious emblems and to wear turbans.

The Defence of India Act was only for the duration of the War and it was to end when the War would come to an end. But the situations being explosive and the Government was not ready to part with the special powers vested in it by the Act. It passed the Rowlatt Bills on the recommendation of the Rowlatt Commission. It vested in the Government special powers to deal with sedition.

Against the Rowlatt Bills, Mahatama Gandhi called upon the people to observe *hartal* on 6th April. It raised great enthusiasm in Punjab. At Amritsar, Dr. Satyapal and Dr. Kitchlew who were guiding the movement were arrested and sent to Dharamsala Jail. A large number of people who marched from Hall Gate to the office of the Deputy Commissioner, were fired at and ten of them were killed. At Lahore a black flag procession was fixed at.

To improve the fast deteriorating situation at Amritsar, the town of Amritsar was handed over to General Dyer on 12th April, 1919 for administration. According to the Hunter's Committee Report, the proclamation to this effect was not properly communicated to the public. On the 13th April, 1919, a public meeting was organised at Jallianwala Bagh, which was enclosed by high house walls on all sides except a small outlet. Without any warning, the General blocked the only exit and ordered the troops to fire at the people. According to the Government, 379 were killed and over 1,200 wounded.<sup>23</sup> At the meeting of the Imperial Legislative Council held on 12th September, 1919, Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya said that the figure of 1,000 killed was nearer the truth than the official assertion.<sup>24</sup> According to the Pandit, there were 42 boys among the dead, the

youngest of them was only seven months old.<sup>25</sup>

It was a massacre of a most non-violent assembly. In order to strike terror among the people, the General resorted to flogging and other third degree methods of punishment. "The effect that Jallianwala and martial law administration", writes Khushwant Singh, "had on the people of the Punjab can hardly be exaggerated. Racial tension reminiscent of the most savage days of the mutiny when every white man looked upon the coloured as his enemy, was re-created. Even people of tried loyalty, including those who had served in the forces, were victimised. Sir Michael O'Dwyer, who claimed that he had saved the empire had in fact dealt it the most grievous blow by alienating almost all Indians including its staunchest supporters."<sup>26</sup>

Jallianwala Bagh Tragedy had far-reaching effects. "Jallianwala Bagh", writes V. N. Datta, "proved a great asset to the nationalist cause. It gave impetus to the struggle for Indian freedom because people could no longer afford to be complacent. The news of Jallianwala Bagh travelled the length and breadth of India and for many it was a rude awakening. From this time onwards political activity increases rapidly and thousands of hitherto uncommitted Indians were drawn into the arena of political activities. The freedom movement had at last acquired a national character."<sup>27</sup>

General Dyer tried his utmost to win over the Sikhs. He summoned the manager of the Golden Temple and Sunder Singh Majithia and urged them to use their influence with the Sikhs in order to win over their favour. He sent out mobile columns through the Sikh villages to save them from the influence of the agitators and to prove that the Government was still strong. Priests of the Golden Temple invited the General to the shrine and presented him with a *siropa*, i.e., turban (*patka*) and *kirpan*.

Sir Michael O'Dwyer, the Lieutenant Governor of Punjab, whose orders General Dyer complied with was murdered by a Sikh Udham Singh at a public meeting in London on

March 13, 1940. Udham Singh was tried and hanged on the 13th June, 1940.

Mahatma Gandhi later visited Jallianwala Bagh and the sites of the atrocities of the Police. Under his inspiring leadership, a new organisation, the Central Sikh League, composed of nationalists and opposed to the Chief Khalsa Diwan's loyalty to the British Government, came into being. The year 1920 was marked by a great change in the temper and tempo of the national movement. The new objective of the movement was *swaraj* the new leader was Mahatma Gandhi and new methods were both non-violent and revolutionary. Thus, in the words of Phillips, the "nationalist middle class agitation was transformed into mass revolutionary movement."<sup>28</sup>

On the 1st August, 1920, Mahatma Gandhi launched the Non-co-operation movement and appealed to the people to surrender titles, honorary posts and observe *hartal* due to the attitude of the Government towards *khilafat* and Amritsar massacre. At a special session of the Indian National Congress under the presidentship of Lala Lajpat Rai on 4th September, 1920, an appeal was made to public servants to dissociate themselves from the administrative and educational institutions and to boycott councils and foreign textiles. At its annual session at Kanpur in 1920, the decision of non-co-operation was ratified with the declaration, "Swaraj by all peaceful and legitimate means." The new policy of the Congress and the crop failure gave an impetus to the movement. The Akali movement brought the Sikhs into the fold of the freedom movement. Boycott of councils, courts, schools and foreign cloth and above all boycott of the Prince of Wales' visit to India in December 1921 and the Hindu-Muslim unity upset the Government, and official machinery resorted to repression. By the end of 1921, the activities of the Akalis in the Punjab, the Moplah revolt on the Malabar Coast, the peasant movement in U.P., the strike of the working class and the Non-co-operation movement of Congress imperilled the very existence of the British Empire.

The movement was withdrawn by Mahatma Gandhi in February 1922 in order to avoid further violence as 22 policemen were burnt alive in a police station.

On the 15th November, 1920, a committee of 175 representatives known as the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee was formed for the management of all Sikh shrines. Sunder Singh Majithia, Harbans Singh of Attari and Bhai Jodh Singh were elected President, Vice-President and Secretary respectively. On the 14th December, 1920, the Shromani Akali Dal was formed with a view to work for the reforms in the Gurdwaras and take over the Gurdwaras from the reaclacitrant *Mahants*. A paper in Gurmukhi, the *Akali* was started with Mangal Singh and Hira Singh Dard as its editors. Mangal Singh Gill, of village Gill, in Ludhiana district, was sentenced to five years imprisonment for anti-Government writing in the *Akali*. Hira Singh Dard was imprisoned several times.

Since its inception, the various agitations launched by the Akali Dal have always been peaceful. The Akalis laid emphasis on non-violence and suffered a lot whether a agitation was religious or political. Acting on the precedents of the Great Gurus, the Akalis made their sacrifices and did not butcher others. Although the agitations of the Akalis were for the liberation of the Gurdwaras, they came into collision with the Government and ultimately contributed to the freedom movement of the country.

The Gurdwara reform movement started by the Akalis had its genesis in the discontent among the Sikhs against the 'Corruption of the Mahants,' the hereditary priests of the Sikhs shrines. Its main aim was to reform the management of the Gurdwaras and to bring them under the control of the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabhandak Committee. The Akali movement during the period 1920-25 was a mass upsurge for the liberation of the Gurdwaras.

The Akalis who launched the agitation for the liberation of the Gurdwaras remained non-violent despite the atrocities committed by the *Mahants*, their hirelings and the

Government. Nankana Sahib, the birth place of Guru Nanak, was managed by an Udasi, Mahant Narain Das, the richest of the *Mahants*. He kept a mistress at the Gurdwara and invited prostitutes to dance in the sacred premises. The local Sikhs protested against the profligacy of the *Mahant* and were eager to turn him out. The *Mahant* asked the police for protection and hired four hundred *thugs* to safeguard his interests.

On the 20th February, 1921, a *jatha* of Akalis led by Lachhman Singh Dharowala entered the Gurdwara. The gates of the Gurdwara were closed and Narain Das's *thugs* attacked the non-violent Akalis with swords, hatchets and firearms and killed them in cold blood. The dead and dying Akalis were dragged to pile of wood collected earlier and set on fire. By the time, the police and the local Sikhs reached the spot, 130 Akalis had been burnt. For the murder of 130 Akalis, three were sentenced to death and two including the *Mahant* were imprisoned for life. Bands of the Akalis began to converge on Nankana Sahib and it was openly alleged that the Commissioner of Lahore had supported the *Mahant* secretly with whose permission he purchased arms. The Commissioner of Lahore hurried to Nankana Sahib and handed over the keys of the Gurdwaras to the representatives of the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabhandak Committee. It is to the credit of Akalis that despite great atrocities they remained peaceful and conducted the *morcha* peacefully. Mahatma Gandhi remarked about this, "Every thing points to a second edition of Dyerism, more barbarous and more fiendish than the barbarism at Jallianwala Bagh."<sup>29</sup>

Repression and economic distress gave an impetus to the Akali Movement. Radical leaders who came to the forefront were of different shades of political opinion and religious enthusiasm. Baba Kharak Singh, Mehtab Singh and Teja Singh Samunderi were inspired by religious consideration. Master Tara Singh and three brothers—Amar Singh, Surmukh Singh and Jaswant Singh of Jhabal were religious and nationalistic.

Being suspicious of the bonafides of Baba Kharak Singh, the new president of the S.G.P.C., the Deputy Commissioner of Amritsar took away the keys of the Golden Temple Amritsar on the 7th November, 1921 and intended to hand them over to a person nominated by him. The S.G.P.C. did not allow the nominees of the Deputy Commissioner to enter the Gurdwara. On November 21, the police arrested 192 prominent Akali leaders including Baba Kharak Singh, Mehtab Singh and Master Tara Singh. They were sentenced to various terms of imprisonment. Over 1,200 Akalis were arrested in 13 districts of the province. The Government interceded by January 1922, all the Akali leaders were set free and the keys of the Golden Temple were given to Baba Kharak Singh. Mahatma Gandhi congratulated the Baba telegraphically, "First decisive battle of India's freedom won. Congratulations."<sup>30</sup>

Sunder Dass, the *Mahant* of the Guru ka Bagh, a small shrine near Amritsar, handed over the Gurdwara to the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee and was baptised as Sikh. But when he saw the favourable attitude of the Government towards the Mahants, he asserted that though he had handed over the Gurdwara to the S.G.P.C. yet he regarded the Guru ka Bagh as his personal property. He objected to the Sikhs cutting of timber for the *langar* in the Gurdwara. On the 9th August, 1922, five Sikhs were arrested on the charge of trespass and sentenced to six months rigorous imprisonment. The Government arrested the S.G.P.C. leaders including Mehtab Singh and Master Tara Singh. The police blocked all the approaches to the Guru ka Bagh Gurdwara and severely beat those with iron knobbed *lathis* who proceeded to the shrine till they fell unconscious on the ground.

The Akali *jathas* of 100 volunteers daily proceeded to Guru Ka Bagh and remained non-violent in the word and deed. They were severely beaten by the police and thrown into ditches where non-government relief parties picked them up. For nineteen days, the Akali *jathas* were sent and

treated in the like manner. The distinguished leaders like Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya, Hakim Ajmal Khan, Dr. Rajinder Parsad and C. R. Andrews condemned the non-violent Akalis being beaten by the police. C. F. Andrews was greatly moved and he wrote, "A new heroism, learnt through suffering has arisen in the land. A new lesson in moral warfare has been taught to the world."<sup>31</sup> The Lt. Governor of Punjab who visited Guru ka Bagh ordered the police to stop beating the *satyagrahi* Akalis. By that time, 5,605 Akalis had been arrested and 936 were hospitalised. Due to the intercession of the Lt. Governor, Sir Ganga Ram, retired engineer and philanthropist, purchased the land and handed it over to the Akalis.

Maharaja Ripduman Singh of Nabha had sympathy with the Akalis and the British Government was eager to dethrone him. On the complaint of Maharaja Bhupinder Singh of Patiala, the boundary dispute between Patiala and Nabha States was referred to British Court of Inquiry. The court gave the verdict against the Maharaja of Nabha. The political agent forced Ripduman Singh to abdicate. This greatly hurt the feeling of the Sikhs. The S.G.P.C. passed a resolution demanding the restoration of the Maharaja and asked the Sikhs to observe 9th September, 1923, as Nabha Day. The Sikhs of Nabha State organised *akhand path* on the occasion. One such *akhand path* was at Gurdwara Gangsar in village Jaito. The police of Punjab and Nabha State entered the shrine, interrupted the recitation of the holy *Granth* and arrested some Akalis. This greatly hurt the Sikhs sentiments and a new *morcha* was launched. The Government declared S.G.P.C. and Shiromani Akali Dal as unlawful bodies. Prominent Akali leaders including Mehtab Singh, Teja Singh Samundri, Teja Singh Akarpuri, Bawa Harikishan Singh, Gyani Sher Singh, Prof. Teja Singh, Prof. Naranjan Singh, Sarmukh Singh Jhabal, Sohan Singh Josh, Gopal Singh Qaumi and Sewa Singh Thikriwala were arrested on the charge of waging war against the King and brought to Lahore Fort for trial. The *jathas* continued to march to Jaito. They

were severely beaten and many of them imprisoned. On February 21, 1923, a *jatha* of 500 was fired upon but the members of the *jatha* continued marching resulting in considerable loss of life. The Indian National Congress declared its full support to the Akali *morcha* at Jaito. Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru, Santhanam and A. T. Gidwani, who were members of the all India Congress Committee, proceeded to Jaito from Delhi to ascertain the exact position. They were arrested on the orders of J. Wilson Johanston, I.C.S., the Administrator of Nabha State on September 21, 1923. They were produced in the court in the Nabha State on October 3, 1923 for trial. Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru in his statement commented on the arbitrary manner in which the case against him in the court was conducted, "Thus on the admission of the court it is the administrator who decides on some of our applications presented to this court and the court merely transmits his orders to us. The gentleman who initiated the proceedings against us thus becomes our judge. It is because of our conviction that it is not possible to obtain justice in matters to which the Government is a party, that we refrain from offering a defence doing."<sup>32</sup> He further maintained, I do not know what the State of Nabha was during the previous administration. But the present administration has certainly shown in our case a remarkable disregard of all rules of law and procedure. It seems to me very strange that any straight forward administration should seek to keep out all outsiders and be afraid of our exposure. Something must be radically wrong for an administration to have recourse to the preventive sections of the code in order to shift all legitimate inquiry."<sup>33</sup> They were sentenced to two years and six months imprisonment. But they were released. The Government ultimately surrendered in October 1924 and allowed a *jatha* of Sikh Sudhar Sabha to enter the Gurdwara at Jaito in order to hold the *akhand path*.

The result of the peaceful Akali *morchas* was that the Government passed the Sikh Gurdwaras and Shrines Act in 1925.



Throughout the Sikhs' struggle for Gurdwara Reform, the Akalis remained non-violent despite the atrocities perpetrated on them by the Government and the *Mahants*, about thirty thousand Akalies were imprisoned, four hundred were killed and two thousand were wounded, fifteen lakhs of rupees were paid as fine and forfeitures. The restrictions were imposed on the employment of the Sikhs in the military and civil department.<sup>34</sup>

Despite these vicissitudes, the Akalis were non-violent. The Babbars also played a significant role against the Raj. Prof. Ruchi Ram Sahni writes, "The Akalis, went through sufferings and made sacrifices that could not have been demanded of seasoned soldiers. In their case it was not a blind obedience like that of the Balaclava horsemen. Not desperate submission to an order because it must be obeyed, but the imdomitable, unconquerable faith that they were doing the right thing in the service of their God and the community. The stories of the crusades pale into insignificant before the Guru ka Bagh or Jaito episodes, for instance because if for no other reason, the Akalis practised non-violence such as Christ himself preached in the sermon of the mount."<sup>35</sup>

Due to the efforts of Bhai Santokh Singh and Abdul Majid, the Kirti Kissan Party was formed in 1927. The publication of the newspaper, *The Kirti* was started. In the beginning, the party worked for the reduction of rents, abolition of *nazranas*, etc. Due to its association with the revolutionary Nau Jawan Sabha the Government became apprehensive of its designs with the assistance of the Unionist Party, the activities of the Party were curbed. As a result, the members of the party changed their loyalty and joined the Communist Party.

In March 1926, Bhagat Singh formed the Nau Jawan Sabha with a view to inspire the Punjabi youth for the revolutionary activities. Due to the efforts of Bhagat Singh, Sardul Singh and others, the Nau Jawan Sabha soon became powerful. Eminent national leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru

spoke from its platform.

In 1923 in association with the Kirti Kisan Party, the Nau Jawan Sabha spread its activities. A "Tract Society" was established with the primary object of publishing revolutionary literature. Their literature was mostly distributed among the students at Lahore—a centre of learning at that time. The Sabha also organised a big procession under the leadership of Lala Lajpat Rai to protest against the all white Simon Commission. While heading the procession, the Lala received fatal blows of police *lathis* and died due to injuries on 17th November, 1928. Greatly enraged, Bhagat Singh and others killed a high police officer Saunders.

After this incident the Punjab revolutionaries went under ground and formed Hindustan Socialist Republican Association. Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutt threw bombs in the Central Assembly Hall with a view to apprise the British Government about the sentiments of the Indian people. The Lahore Conspiracy Case was instituted in 1929. Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru were sentenced to death in October 1930.

Though Mahatma Gandhi always advocated for non-violence and was not in favour of the violent movement of Bhagat Singh and his associates he had all praise for the supreme sacrifice and patriotism of Bhagat Singh. Mahatma Gandhi said, "It is impossible to assess his (Bhagat Singh's) courage. Hanging has placed a crown of bravery on these youngmen. Wherever words of praise have been said in favour of those youngmen, I agree with it. We must appreciate their sacrifice, bravery and unbounded courage though we may not use our courage the way they used it."<sup>36</sup>

Sohan Singh Josh and these companions of Bhagat Singh were involved in Meerut Conspiracy Case. Due to the ruthlessness of the British Government, the revolutionary movement gradually faded out but it left its great impact.

In the meantime, the First Round Table Conference was convened to discuss the recommendations of the Simon

Commission. In this Conference the Sikh delegates expressed their consent to joint electorates with the reservation of seats for minorities but they were against communal majorities based on separate electorates. The Sikhs were given the right to have separate electorate.

In the Second Round Table Conference the representatives of the Sikhs, Ujjal Singh and Sampuran Singh demanded for the Sikhs 30 per cent. representation in the Punjab and 5 per cent. at the centre and at least one Sikh member in the Central Cabinet. The consences could not be reached in the conference due to the disagreement among the delegates on April 16, 1932. Ramsay MacDonald announced his award on communal representation. According to it, the Sikhs like Muslims were given separate weightage. 33 out of 175 in the Punjab Assembly, 3 out of 50 in the North West Frontier Province, 6 out of 350 in the Federal Legislative Assembly and 4 out of 150 in the Council were Sikhs.

Sampuran Singh and Ujjal Singh strongly criticised the award and withdrew from the conference.

The Third Round Table Conference was convened to consider the reports of the committees. Out of 46 Indians, Tara Singh of Ferozepur represented the Sikhs. He protested against autonomy under a dominant Muslim majority. He suggested safeguards which would provide that measures affecting minorities should not be passed without the consent of three-fifths of the community and it should be subject to the veto of the Governor.

Communal relations worsened during the thirties and riots were widespread. At Lahore over the site of the Gurdwara Sahidganj, there were serious communal riots.

The Government of India Act was passed by the British Parliament in 1935. According to this Act, there was an All India Fedration having a Federal Court and Federal Public Service Commission. In place of dyarchy in the provinces, the provincial autonomy was introduced. At the centre, dyarchy was introduced. The federal scheme was opposed

by all political parties. The provincial scheme was deemed better and the various parties agreed to participate in elections in 1937. In the Punjab, the Sikhs split into two parties, the Akalis and the anti-Akali party known as the Khalsa Nationalist Party. Out of the total of 175 seats, the Khalsa Nationalist Party had 15-20 seats and some members constantly changed their loyalty. In the ministry of Sikander Hayat Khan one Sikh, Sunder Singh Majithia was also included.

Inspired by the political movements in British India, the backward people of the Princely States launched struggle to abolish feudalism and to obtain democratic right with the help of the Congress, they formed political party known as Praja Mandal.

Due to the growth of nationalism in British India the Britishers began to rely more upon the support of Indian rulers. The political unrest of the early twenties in the Punjab drew the people of the Princely States and the British empire closer to one another. The Akali Dal also began to take interest in affairs of the Princely States of the Punjab. The arrest of some prominent and popular leaders by the Patiala State greatly hurt the feelings of the people who convened a meeting at Mansa on 7th July, 1928. The foundation of the Punjab Riyasti Praja Mandal was laid in the conference.

On 10th August, 1929, the Punjab Riyasti Praja Mandal decided to extend its activities to other neighbouring States such as Pataudi, Nahan, Mandi, Saket, Chamba, Bhawalpur and Kashmir. The Praja Mandal advocated for the curtailment of royal-purses and privileges, popular legislatures, independent judiciary and obtaining other rights for the people.

With the help of Congress, the Praja Mandal Movement gained momentum. The Princes tried to suppress the movement. Midnight raids were conducted on villages. The properties of the participants were confiscated and they were imprisoned. Sewa Singh Thikriwala, President of the Punjab Riyasti Praja Mandal, was arrested and sentenced to eight

years imprisonment and rupees five thousand as fine. He went on hunger strike in jail and died on 20th January, 1935.

When Mahatma Gandhi launched the Quit Movement in 1942, the Praja Mandal supported it. According to the Act of 1935, the Princes had the option to join federation or not. The people of the States were ready to merge with India to end the aristocratic and autocratic rule of the Princes. In 1946, there was the agitation in Faridkot State against its arbitrary ruler. Giani Zail Singh's role in this agitation was conspicuous. When Giani Zail Singh informed Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru about the atrocities perpetrated by the Raja of Faridkot, the Pandit expressed sympathies with the people of the State and resolved to visit Faridkot State. He arrived at Faridkot on the 27th May, 1946, hoisted the tri-colour flag and in his speech maintained, "The British are going most definitely. If Indian States who depend for their existence on the British do not move with them then they cannot exist."<sup>37</sup> These words are prophetic about the future relations of the national government with the Indian States. The seriousness of the situation was realised by the Raja of Faridkot. He entered into negotiations with Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru and the result was Nehru-Harinder Pact.<sup>38</sup>

In 1939, the Second World War broke out. As Great Britain was engaged in the War, India being her dependency was declared a belligent country. The Congress protested that the people of the country had not been consulted on this ground. The Congress ministries resigned and Mahatma Gandhi started Individual Satyagraha against the war propaganda of the Government.

During the War, the reverses suffered by the British cast gloom over India. The Sikhs became restless. There were rumours of a Khalsa rising against the Unionist ministry. The Sikh leaders denounced the Unionist Ministry as Muslim Raj. In July 1941, Lord Linlithgow nominated the Maharaja of Patiala and Naunihal Singh Mann to the Defence Council and a year later Sir Jogendra Singh was nominated to the Executive Council as member in charge of the education

portfolio.

In March 1942, Sir Stafford Cripps, a socialist and a friend of Jawahar Lal Nehru was dispatched to India to offer independence as soon as the War ended. The statement of Cripps about the British policy that it was their duty to protect the minorities, greatly offended the Congress. Master Tara Singh, Baldev Singh, Sir Jogendra Singh and Ujjal Singh waited on Cripps as the Sikh representatives. But the Cripps Mission ended in failure.

Due to the frustration in the country and the growing pressure of the Japanese on the British, Mahatma Gandhi launched the Quit India Movement in 1942. The Indian National Congress was declared an illegal institution. The Government lifted the ban on Communist Party. A large number of Punjabi communists were Sikhs. They began to publish propaganda literature in many languages including Punjabi. Their weekly *jang-i-Azadi* and pamphlets supported the demand of Muslims for Pakistan.

The Indian National Army commonly known as I. N. A. under the able leadership of Subhas Chandra Bose and Mohan Singh greatly contributed to the freedom struggle. Out of the 20,000 Indian prisoners of war who volunteered to join I. N. A. a large number was that of the Sikhs.

Among the Sikh officers were Colonel Niranjan Singh Gill, Major Mahabir Singh Dhillon and Captain Thakar Singh. In the provisional government established by Subhash Chandra Bose, two army officers Naripendra Singh Bhagat and Lieutenant-Colonel Gulzara Singh and one civilian Dahar Singh Narala of bangkok, were Sikhs. The newly formed army fought many battles for the country. The I. N. A. was disbanded after the War.

After the War in 1945, the Labour Party won the elections in England. The new Labour Government ordered general elections in India. In these elections the Muslim League fared better. In the Punjab, the Muslim League captured 79 seats out of a total of 175 seats. No single party had so many seats. The Congress, the Sikhs and Unionist Party joined to prevent

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the Muslim League from coming to power.

A Cabinet Mission consisting of Lord Patric Lawrence, Sir Staford Cripps and A. Alexander was sent to India to effect the political settlement among the various parties of India. Master Tara Singh, Gyani Kartar Singh and Harnam Singh composed the Sikh delegation who were interviewed by the Cabinet Mission. The Sikh delegation opposed the formation of Pakistan. Master Tara Singh asserted that he was for a united India, but if the demand for Pakistan was conceded he was for a separate Sikh State with the right of joining either with India or Pakistan. But the Cabinet Mission took no notice of Sikhistan, Azad Punjab or Khalistan and treated the claim as something put up by the Indian National Congress to baffle the Muslim Leagues' demand for Pakistan. The Cabinet Mission's scheme for the unity of India while largely meeting the viewpoint of the League proved abortive. After the failure of the Cabinet Mission, the Labour Government of England decided to establish an Interim Government comprising the representatives of the major political parties. On September 2, 1946, Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru's Cabinet was sworn in, Baldev Singh joined as the Defence Minister. After a few months, the Muslim League joined it. But the League resorted to a policy of 'Direct Action.' The first Direct Action Day was fixed on 6th August, 1946. There was great turmoil on that day. The division of the country appeared inevitable.

Lord Mountbatten was particularly sent to India to effect the peaceful partition of India. The Congress was persuaded by the new Viceroy to accept the partition of the country. The Sikhs were opposed to the formation of Pakistan. On the assurance of the Congress that they would be accorded due treatment in India, they threw their lot with the Congress. On 2nd June, 1947, Plan for the partition of the country was announced after its approval by the Congress and the Sikhs and the Muslim League. At last, the long struggle for independence came to an end after the independence of India on 15th August, 1947.

The Sikhs played a prominent role in India's struggle for freedom. They were second to none in their efforts to throw off the foreign yoke. The daring Sikhs did not hesitate to sacrifice their all for their mother-land. In a letter to the Editor of the *Sikh Gazette Forum*, Delhi, July 1-15, 1986, Gilbert Lobo wrote about the grand sacrifices of the Sikhs, "Sikhs have relatively shed more blood for India than any other community. Out of the 2125 martyrs for freedom, 1557 or 75 percent. were Sikhs. Out of 2646 sent to Andamans for life sentence 2147 or 80 per cent. were Sikhs. Out of 127 Indians who were sent to gallows, 92 or 80 per cent. were Sikhs. In Subhash Bose's army of 20,000; 12,000 were Sikhs, where as Sikhs were just 2 per cent. of the total population.<sup>39</sup> Moreover, the non-violence performance of the heroes of different *morchas* of Akali Movement, is unparalleled in the annals of our freedom struggle.

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## WOMEN AND DEVELOPMENT IN PUNJAB

MALKIT KAUR

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Virtually in all the societies of the world women are excluded from certain crucial economic or political activities and their roles as wives and mothers are associated with fewer powers and prerogatives than are the roles of men. Although the extent of equality of women varies in different societies ranging from equal or near to equal to utter subjection, but sexual asymmetry is presently a universal fact of human social life. Regarding the status of women in India the empirical studies are only recent in origin, but since many of the contemporary attitudes towards the status of women are rooted in the past, a brief historical review of the changing status of women becomes necessary. Literary and historical research has now established beyond doubt that women held a position of equality in all spheres of life in Vedic periods (2500-1500 B.C.). Degradation started in Brahmanic period (1500-500 B.C.) and it was during the period of Sutras and Epics (500 B.C.-500 A.D.) that position of women deteriorated to a great extent due to various socio-political factors, foreign invasions and misrepresentation of the old religious texts, which continued in the period of later Smritis (500 A.D.-1800 A.D.). The theory of perpetual tutelage of women formulated by Manu, became prevalent. The position of women continued to be degraded till 1800 A. D., when lack of education, child marriages, polygamy, seclusion, purdah, prohibition of widow remarriage and practice of 'Sati'

brought about tremendous deterioration in her position at home and in society in general. After 1800 A.D. various socio-cultural and politico-economic circumstances, protest movements, social reform-movements, and call of Gandhi Ji during freedom struggle in 1920's brought about great changes in the position of women through education, socio-economic and legislative measures. After independence, improvement in status of women was a pledge made by the constitution makers and admitted by the Government from the very beginning as one of the major task facing the country.

Various scholars have indicated that though many changes have occurred in traditional conception of role and status of women through new opportunities for education and employment, emergence of new socio-economic patterns and the privileges of equal legal and political rights, the pressure of traditional customs and norms continue to affect the society's attitude towards women. The institution of caste and the patriarchal family, religious mores and dominant value systems are still surcharged with the spirit of male domination. The Indian Council of Social Science Research has indicated (Mazumadar, 1977) an increasing gap in the male-female literacy rates, an accelerated decline in women's employment since 1951; a glaring disparity between men and women among poor sections of the population in their access to health care and medical services and consequently a relatively high mortality among female children and persistent decline in the proportion of women in the population.

The Committee on status of women (1974) found that almost all the liberal provisions made so far have affected the life styles and status of only a minority of women. Although the changes have been considerable in urban areas, the problems continued to remain virtually unchanged in most of rural areas, where low level of literacy, lack of mobility and skills, lack of access to various services and the

force of tradition and custom still characterise the status of women and make her a tool for doing work with no rights of her own. After independence, the major thrust of India's planning had been the economic development both in Agricultural and Industrial Sector. Afterwards it was realised that social justice i.e. more equitable distribution of income and wealth among the different sections of the population is important. But now it has been realised that within the family also men and women have not been benefitted equally by the development process. A large majority of women have been bypassed in the process of distribution of fruits of development. The Sixth Five Year Plan has for the first time explicitly recognised that development process has discriminated against women.

In the earlier five year plans a welfare approach had been the main thrust towards women issues. The sixth five-year plan (1985-90) was a land mark as women's development received recognition as a specific development section and a separate chapter on women's development was for the first time included in the plan document. The plan adopted a multidisciplinary approach with a three pronged thrust on health, education and employment. In the seventh plan (1985-90) development programmes for women continued.

In the 8th plan an attempt was to be made to ensure that women are not bypassed in distribution of benefits in different sectors of development. Special programmes for women need to be initiated in all the sectors, as women in many cases could not benefit from the general programme. It was also emphasised that women should be made equal partners in the process of development. Thus there was a shift from Development to empowerment of women. Ninth plan while mentioning about the women's empowerment, emphasises the need for making special financial provisions for women in each department.

Within the broad goals laid down by the Five Year Plans,

Govt. initiated a number of policies and programmes for improving the condition of women. For providing an organisational structure and to co-ordinate efforts towards gender equality, Central Social Welfare Board was established in 1953. Since then the concept of a National Machinery for Women's Development has developed. Department of Women and Child Development was set up in 1985 under the ministry of Human Resource Development. After that there has been a continuous growth of many new institutions. Govt. initiatives have been supplemented by the efforts of the voluntary sector and that of the Women's movement. Enactment of the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts of 1993 constitute an important step in the path of women's Development. There have been noteworthy achievements in the areas relating to women's rights, education, employment and health.

In spite of these National level policies, presenting a general picture of Indian women, ignoring the social, economic, cultural and regional differences would be inappropriate. The traditions, customs, norms and values prevalent in each society determine to a great extent, the impact these planned efforts will have on the position of women.

As far as the position of women and the society's attitude towards them are concerned, Punjab does not present a satisfactory picture. According to a report which appeared in *The Tribune*, 8 March, 1998, "The poor status of women in South Asia is not entirely dependent on economic factors and Punjab is in fact, a prime example of discrimination at work. The malnutrition among girls in some rural areas of Punjab is reported to be seven times higher than the boys." (OXFAM Programme Administrator, 1998).

Such observations about the state of Punjab are not rare to be found in the newspapers and at the discussion table of the National and International fora. These lines while reflecting the condition of women in the state also point

towards the role of socio-cultural factors and the patriarchal values in determining the situation.

Punjab which has experienced tremendous development especially after Green Revolution has attained an important place in the economic map of India. It is expected that economic prosperity would have a significant reflection on its socio-cultural texture and change of attitudes. But condition is not so satisfactory regarding the position of women. While the infrastructural development has lagged behind economic prosperity, change of attitude is still slower as can be seen from the various indicators which will be discussed in this paper. Before discussing the present position, it is necessary to explore the impact of historical forces on the position of women in Punjab.

As has been mentioned earlier a marked deterioration occurred in the position of women in India during the medieval age. North India including Punjab was the worst affected region. Repeated attacks from foreign invaders and conquerors created conditions of insecurity. In order to protect the honour of their women from foreign invaders, practices, like female infanticide, child marriage, Sati, Pardah and ban on female education were adopted and encouraged. This condition continued till the end of the 18th Century. Position of women was miserable when Guru Nanak came on the scene. Girl infants were killed and women who gave birth to daughters were looked down upon. Guru Nanak through his teachings tried to convince the masses about the importance of women in society. In Asa Di War, He says :

ਭੰਡਿ ਜੰਮੀਐ ਭੰਡਿ ਨਿੰਮੀਐ ਭੰਡਿ ਮੰਗਣ ਵੀਆਹੁ ॥

ਭੰਡਹੁ ਹੋਵੇ ਦੇਸਤੀ ਭੰਡਹੁ ਚਲੇ ਰਾਹੁ ॥

ਭੰਡ ਮੁਆ ਭੰਡ ਭਾਲੀਐ ਭੰਡਿ ਹੋਵੇ ਬੰਧਾਨੁ ॥

ਸੋ ਕਿਉਂ ਮੰਦਾ ਆਖੀਐ ਜਿਤ ਜੰਮਹਿ ਰਾਜਾਨ ।

The Sikh Gurus condemned the social evils like purdah, Sati, female infanticide and the beliefs and practices that

down graded women. The purdah system was condemned in Sikhism and Guru Amardas did not even allow the Queen of Haripur to come into Sangat wearing a Veil. (Macauliffe, 1992). Guru Arjun Dev observed "*Raho rahi re bavaria, ghunghat jan kadhe*" (Away, away foolish who crouch in the veil (Sidhu 1967). Guru Amardas Ji also raised his voice against female infanticide and condemned those responsible for this act.

ਹੋਵਾ ਪੀਡਿਤੁ ਜੋਤਕੀ ਵੇਦ ਪੜਾ ਮੁਖਿ ਚਾਰ ॥  
ਨਵਾਂ ਖੰਡਾ ਵਿਚਿ ਜਾਨੀਆਂ ਅਪਨੇਚਜ ਵੀਚਾਰ ॥  
ਬ੍ਰਾਹਮਣ ਕੈਲੀਘਾਤ ਕੰਝਕਾ ਅਣਚਾਰੀ ਕਾ ਧਾਣ ॥  
ਫਿਕਟ ਫਿਟਕਾ ਕੋੜ ਬਦੀਆ ਸਦਾ ਸਦਾ ਅਭਮਾਨ ॥

Sikh Gurus thus rejected the old belief of women being inferior to men and they were in favour of active participation of women in public life.

Singh Sabha movement was another important factor which contributed towards improving the status of women. It raised voice against purdah system, practice of female infanticide, child marriage, practice of Sati, deplorable condition of widows, practice of dowry and extravagant expenditure on marriage ceremonies. Giani Ditt Singh who was the first man to start progaganda against purdah system asserted that all talks about the emancipation of women would be futile without the removal of purdah system.

(Census of Punjab, 1911).

In a conference of the Singh Sabha, a decision was taken that no girl should be married before 18 or at the earliest 16 and no man should be married before 20 and in no case till he is able to maintain himself and his family. (*The Khalsa Advocate*, 1904) The leaders of the Singh Sabha condemning the practice of Sati, pleaded that widows should be allowed to remarry. Referring to the role of the socio religious movements, *The Tribune* (July 26, 1912) stated, "the various religious and social organisations in the province, the Singh Sabha, Anjumans and the Arya Samaj have done

commendable work to promote education of women." Role of Women of Punjab in public life got an impetus when they participated in great numbers in the freedom movement. The Sikh women's role in the national movement became prominent when they participated in the famous Gurdwara reform movement.

These historical forces were expected to have positive effect on the position of Women in Punjab. But inspite of such progressive spiritual teachings of Sikh Gurus, the position of women in Punjab remains far from satisfactory. Punjab on the one hand is quoted for making tremendous progress on economic front, but on the other hand it is also quoted to show that economic progress does not necessarily means improved condition for women.

In this paper, for analysing the contemporary position of women in Punjab, three important indicators i.e. their health, education and employment have been taken into account.

**Health status of women :** Health in any society must be seen beyond medical framework, as much depends on social, economic, cultural and political condition of society. A very revealing and sensitive index of the health condition of women is the sex-ratio and in the state of Punjab, it has been adverse to women. A very low sex-ratio of the state is attributed to the high mortality among the females. Historically also Punjab had the most imbalanced sex ratio. A very demeaning practice which unfortunately had been in existence in Punjab was the practice of female infanticide. In spite of its condemnation by the Sikh Gurus, practice of female infanticide could not be eradicated thoroughly. Talking about the practice of female infanticide in Punjab, Darling (1925) mentioned, "But the most surprising thing of all is that, inspite of the deplorable shortage of women, female infanticide still persists. This would be difficult to prove, but those who are in a position to know are agreed that it exists here and there, where caste is high and suitable



husbands few." "Now a days it is usually the grand mother and the midwife who gets rid of the infant and the methods most resorted to are starvation, or starvation followed by a glut of milk, which causes severe colic, or exposure to the weather; but when hasty measures are desired, the poor infant is placed in a large jar, the cover is put on and not removed till the child is suffocated."

Risley (1969) referred to the orders issued by an English administrator John Lawrance about Punjab.

*"Thau shall not commit Sati*

*Thau shall not kill thy daughter*

*Thau shall not burry a leper alive"*

This speaks about the prevalence of this practice even in the earlier part of the twentieth century. And today, when we have achieved tremendous progress in different spheres, a very disgraceful practice of female foeticide has not only become popular but has received social sanction also. The already low sex-ratio of the state may lead to a very alarming situation if this practice continues.

The state of Punjab has a sex-ratio of 882 as against 927 at the all India level (Census, 1991). Sex ratio is the number of females per 1000 males. Punjab ranks fifth from bottom with respect to sex-ratio. A look at the time-series data of this century reveals that while for India sex-ratio has declined from 972 in 1901 to 927 in 1991, for Punjab this has increased from 832 in 1901 to 882 in 1991. The trend for Punjab is encouraging as compared to the trend for the country as a whole, where a continuous decline is discernible. But a close look at the data for different years reveals that the increase in the sex-ratio of Punjab noted during the decade of 1981-91 is very less as compared to the earlier four decades. Sex-ratio for Punjab for the year 1951, 1961, 1971, 1981, and 1991 has been 844, 854, 865, 879, 882. This deceleration in the increase during the last decade should be a matter of concern for all of us.

TABLE I : SEX-RATIO IN PUNJAB AND INDIA

	<i>India</i>	<i>Punjab</i>
1901	972	832
1921	955	799
1941	945	836
1951	946	844
1961	941	854
1971	930	865
1981	934	879
1991	927	882

And the reason for this decline can be the increasing trend of female foeticide. If we analyse the data at the District level, out of the 19 Districts of the country where sex-ratio is minimum, 3 districts are of Punjab, 3 of Haryana, 2 of Rajasthan and 1 of Tamilnadu.

TABLE II : SEX-RATIO IN DIFFERENT DISTRICTS OF PUNJAB (1991)

<i>Districts</i>	<i>Sex-ratio</i>
Gurdaspur	903
Amritsar	873
Kapurthala	896
Jalandhar	899
Hoshiarpur	921
Ropar	867
Ludhiana	844
Ferozpur	894
Faridkot	882
Bathinda	884
Mansa	872
Sangrur	870
Patiala	882
Fatehgarh Sahib	872

Although pre-natal sex determination test is legally banned in Punjab, but it has not been properly implemented. The fact that these ultrasound centres are being used less

for the diagnosis of different diseases and more for the pre-natal sex determination has been accepted by the Govt. of Punjab (The Tribune, March 26, 1998). Crimes against women are registering an alarming increase. And the declining sex-ratio can have disastrous consequences for this.

A study conducted by the author along with others (Rajput, Kaur and Sharma, 1993) about the girl child in Punjab found people having a positive attitude towards family planning and they wanted to have small families, but their preference for a male child compelled them to adopt the practices like female foeticide. None of the respondents wanted to have more than one girl child. It was found that birth of the girl child (the one who survives all these pre-natal risks) is still unwelcomed even among the highly educated families.

Related to the question of low sex-ratio in Punjab is the limited access of the female child and women to health. Nutrition and medical care and the resultant high mortality. There is evidence to show that the girl child is breast fed for shorter periods than male child. Mitra (1981) indicated general neglect of female infants and babies in Punjab. Wyon and Gordon (1971) in their longitudinal study of Punjab villages observed that the rate of mortality from all causes was higher among females than males. These differences were attributed to differential allocation of food, health and medical care. Narangwal study (1983) reported similar variations in male/female mortality and attributed them to local social values in the preference for sons. In later Khanna study, Das Gupta (1987) indicated that girls as a whole experience 31 percent higher mortality than boys. Dyson and Moore (1983) attributed these differentials to kinship structure and lack of autonomy for females. A survey by the Punjab Health Deptt. (1991) revealed that atleast 50 percent of the pregnant women were anaemic having high incidence of miscarriages. Even Punjab States' Eighth Five year Plan document makes a mention of the existence of

anaemia as a major health hazard affecting women resulting in maternal mortality and morbidity. In a recent study of Punjab (Rajput, Kaur and Sharma, 1993), it was found that in many cases girls were breast fed for a shorter period of time as compared to boys. Girls also dominated among those children who were not given any milk except mother's milk. In a recent survey by Central Social Welfare Board (The Tribune, May 22, 1998), Amritsar has been found to be one out of the 24 districts which have been identified as least developed with respect to conditions of women and children.

Basu (1991) in her analysis of the male probability of dying by age 5 as a proportion of female probability found that for Punjab this figure is only 0.87 as compared to 0.95 for all India and 1.01 for Kerala, thus indicating a wide-gap in the male female survival among children of the state. These facts reflect a very unsatisfactory condition of female health in the economically most developed state of India.

**Work-force participation :** Female participation in the work force is an important indicator of their status. The debate regarding the non-recognition of women's work both out side and inside the household started in 1960s. After that a number of studies have been done for assessing the contribution of women outside and inside the house. It is the result of these researches, seminars, debates and discussions that today it is being recognised that Indian women, more specially rural women play multifarious socio-economic roles inside as well as outside home. But still the 'invisibility barrier' remains the most important obstacle in the way of women's contributions getting recognised by the policy makers and planners.

In Punjab, according to census data female work force participation rate (which was only 6.2% in 1981 has declined further to 4.4% while at the National level this rate was 19.7% in 1981 and has increased to 22.3% in 1991. This rate is lowest for Punjab and Haryana is next to it. But field level studies conducted in these two states reveal a completely different

picture. A UNIFEM sponsored study (Wig, 1996) conducted in Sangrur District of Punjab revealed very interesting facts. The lowest female work participation in Punjab inspite of being an economically prosperous state attracted the attention for this research. Results revealed that male participation rate was found to be 54.0% without probing and 62.5% after probing, whereas female work participation rate was found to be 7.6% without probing and 58.5% after probing. This clearly indicates that there is a tendency to show their women folk as non working. Because not allowing their women to work in the fields is considered as a status symbol. A very revealing finding was that villages having Zero level of female participation rate according to 1991 census show a participation rate ranging from 57.4% to 69.5% after probing. Another very interesting finding which the author came across in her study of Haryana (Kaur, 1988) was that even women themselves consider a women as working only if she is working in some govt. or private office, industry etc. Thus the actual participation of female in the work force is not reflected through these official statistics. This acts as a hinderance in the way of their integration in the policies and programmes of development. Thus socio-cultural factors affect the access to and inclusion of the women in the development programme. Attempt should be made to educate the people in this respect so that real contributions of women can be assessed and recognised.

**Educational Status of Women :** Educational Status of Women is considered to be an important indicator of status of women in society and the attitude of society towards women. Before the advent of the British rule, education for Punjabi women was confined to learning the principal tenets of their religion. Against the 4.42% literacy for males only 0.06% of the females were literate (Census, 1881).

The existence of prejudice against female education could be judged from the fact that parents even objected to inspection of the schools by male officers of the govt. (Mehta,

1971). Religion-wise, Hindus were ahead in literacy followed by Sikhs and Muslims. As Sikhs were mainly agriculturists living in the rural areas, only a small population especially the Khatris in the urban areas were educated. Singh Sabha movement among the Sikhs advocated the cause of female education at a time when women's ability to reading and writing was not considered to be a sign of respectability. Women staying inside the four walls of the house were considered to be respectable. It was believed that one who stays at home is worth a lakh, who wanders out is worth a straw (District Gazetteer, Multan (1901-02). In the Quinquennial Indian Education Report 1912-17 under the chapter 'female education' it was remarked that 'The Arya Samaj and Sikh Societies were making great efforts to bring education within the reach of the masses. (Education Committee, Chief Khalsa Diwan).

Situation was very disappointing till 1921. A good improvement was observed in the decade 1941-51. After independence there has been a continuous increase in the literacy rates, as is clear from the table.

TABLE III : LITERACY RATES IN PUNJAB (1901-1991)

<i>Year</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
1901	3.6	6.2	0.2
1911	3.9	6.2	0.4
1921	3.4	6.3	0.5
1931	4.9	8.5	1.2
1951	12.6	17.8	6.6
1961	25.0	33.0	15.8
1971	33.7	40.4	25.9
1981	40.9	47.2	33.7
1991	49.3	55.1	42.7

After the onset of Green Revolution, Punjab has experienced all round development. Although the State has the highest per capita income, a good network of

infrastructure and good availability of schools, but still Punjab ranked 10th in literacy among various states (1981). About 57.3% women are illiterate in the richest state of the country. Although female literacy rate of Punjab is higher than the National average, but we are far behind the states like Kerala.

TABLES IV : DISTRICT-WISE LITERACY RATES IN  
PUNJAB ACCORDING TO GENDER AND RESIDENCE,  
1991

<i>Districts</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Urban</i>			<i>Rural</i>		
				<i>Total</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>F</i>
Gurdaspur	53.5	60.2	45.8	62.7	66.7	57.9	50.8	58.3	42.1
Amritsar	47.4	53.0	41.0	63.5	67.6	58.8	39.1	45.5	31.8
Ferozepur	40.1	47.4	31.9	57.4	62.5	51.6	34.6	42.7	25.7
Ludhiana	57.6	62.2	52.9	66.2	70.3	61.5	4.7	60.6	78.0
Kapurthala	53.5	58.9	47.4	64.0	68.8	58.5	49.8	55.4	43.7
Hoshiarpur	59.8	66.4	52.8	68.0	72.6	62.8	58.2	65.2	51.0
Ropar	57.1	64.2	49.1	69.1	73.7	63.8	53.0	60.9	44.1
Patiala	49.4	54.6	43.4	64.3	67.1	61.2	42.7	49.2	35.5
Sangrur	38.7	44.6	32.1	50.9	56.5	44.6	34.7	40.7	28.0
Bathinda	35.9	42.0	23.7	55.2	61.0	48.5	30.3	36.4	23.4
Faridkot	41.5	47.2	35.1	55.5	61.0	49.3	36.8	42.5	30.3
Punjab State	49.3	55.1	42.7	61.5	68.7	56.8	44.1	50.5	36.9

A district level analysis reveals that female literacy is highest in Jullandhar (52.9%), followed by Hoshiapur (52.8%) and Ludhiana (52.2%). On the other hand Bhatinda (23.7%), Ferozepur (31.9%) and Sangrur (32.1%) reveal lowest literacy for females. Districts showing high female literacy are those with high rates of emigration to other countries because of the inflow of money and development of schooling facility and increased awareness because of the linkage to the outside world. The long tradition of service in defence and other tertiary services played their role in literacy in these areas. Districts along the International border with Pakistan and those lying in the Malwa region emerged as low literacy areas because of the late start of educational facilities, lack of

urbanism and low participation in the agricultural activities.

A look at the gender differentials in literacy reveal that these differentials are higher in rural areas as compared to urban areas. Similarly differentials in the literacy rates of rural-urban females are higher than rural and urban male. Male Female disparity in literacy is continuously decreasing since 1951 and it is lower than the disparity at the National level. Scarcity of female teachers in schools, social norms against the co-education, lack of girls schools, tendency to educate only sons in the conditions of scarcity, involvement of girls in the work inside and outside the home, conservative outlook, non-availability of educational facilities near the house and lack of vocational training and employment after education are some of hinderances in the way of girls education. Although as a result of improved income levels after green revolution, women from high socio-economic strata are withdrawing from the field work and emphasis is being given to girls education but still various socio-economic factors act as obstacles.

**Conclusion :** Above analysis clearly reveals that although State of Punjab has experienced tremendous development on the economic front, but its impact on the socio-economic life of women has been comparatively very less. Punjab which has got the top position on the economic front in the country, is counted as backward as far as the position of women is concerned. Main reason for this is the social attitude towards women and girl children. Need is to bring about a change in the thinking and attitude towards women. Although it is a very slow process, yet social planning can act as a catalyst in this direction.

In the present context, a separate department for Women's Development as it exists today is a must, but if we want to fully integrate women in the process of development, each sector and each department in its policy, planning and programmes should take into consideration the needs and



problems of women. During evaluation of any policy or programme it should be ensured that impact on men and women will be assessed separately. Ninth five year plan has taken this fact into consideration but to what extent this is actually implemented is to be seen. For this Gender sensitisation programmes for the functionaries at different levels are very essential.

Punjab where religion preaches equality of sexes and place for women in all spheres of domestic and public life, we have still to go a long way in translating these spiritual teachings into practical life.

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## A BRIEF SURVEY OF SIKH THEOLOGICAL STUDIES\*

ANAND SPENCER

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This article attempts to survey briefly the work done in the Sikh theological studies. It aims at sketching out a simple outline of the stages of Sikh theological writings with brief notes on the basic nature of important works attempted during these stages. The survey deals with the works in two separate parts : one dealing with the writings of Indian origins and the other dealing with Western works attempted in the Sikh theological studies. In each part the study makes a review of the literature and writers on chronological basis.

As we proceed, we must notice a fact that until the middle of the twentieth century we do not find much scholarly and systematic work done exclusively on Sikh theology. There is a basic reason for this lack of exclusive attention given to Sikh theological studies. It lies in the late origin of Sikhism itself.<sup>1</sup> Sikhism has not yet completed three hundred years after the passing away of its last Guru.<sup>2</sup> Obviously within this small period of time, all its energies and interest have naturally and primarily been devoted and directed towards building up of its entity and organizing structures.<sup>3</sup> For that reason a theological and scholarly study in Sikhism could not secure full attention.<sup>4</sup>

Sikhism saw many ups and downs, persecutions and attacks, apostasies and heresies during the course of its

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history. It once seemed to be 'a waning religion.'<sup>5</sup> a religion 'on the decline'<sup>6</sup>. But, in spite of all such trials and tribulations, Sikhism steered its way to be an ineluctable religious entity.<sup>7</sup> It is remarkable to note that "from the moment of its initiation by Guru Nanak to its ritual consecration by the Tenth Master, Guru Gobind Singh, a period of barely 200 years, Sikhism acquired not only its distinctive church and institutions, songs and scriptures, signs and symbols, but also, an unmistakable form or stance."<sup>8</sup>

Though Sikhism contains all the features and contents of being called a distinct religion, it did not develop a very sustained and systematic theology. An organized attention has not been directed to dogmatize the concepts and ideas enunciated in the Guru Granth. So there is hardly any such thing as formulated or dogmatic theology in the Sikh religion.<sup>9</sup> For this, there could, perhaps, be another reason also. It seems that the Sikh Guru did not have any particular aim or interest in propounding any dogmatic theology.<sup>10</sup> But this does not mean that Sikhism does not have any systematic theology at all. It does have, but it lies in an implicit manner in the religious literature of Sikhism. And this literature needs to be searched and explored to bring out a systematic outline of Sikh theological studies.

The history of Sikh theology is the history of individual interpretations of Sikhs' theological concepts and ideas present in Sikh religious writings. Therefore, the survey of Sikh theological studies includes in its scope the writings dealing with Sikh religion in general. It is to be noted that the dominating note of these religious writings has been historical and biographical.

This historical and biographical approach to Sikh studies has been prevalent throughout the whole period of Sikhs history, and particularly it dominated the early phase of Sikh writings.

### **Part I : Writings of Indian Origins**

#### **(a) Early Stage : 1604-1708**

The first stage of Sikh theological writings begins after

the compilation of the Guru Granth in 1604 and ends with the passing away of Guru Gobind Singh in 1708. The early writings which began to evolve just after the compilation of the Guru Granth were characterised primarily with legendary material and mythical elements.<sup>11</sup> Even the biographical stories were more interested in miraculous and supernatural aspects of important lives, particularly that of Gurus. These tendencies have been a common feature in the *Janam Sakhis*, the earliest known works<sup>12</sup> after the compilation of the Guru Granth. However, *Meharban Janam Sakhi* seems to reflect a little philosophical bent, and makes a little rudimentary study of Sikh theological ideas. The primary nature of this work is biographical.

Among the earliest works which attract our interest are the writings of Bhai Gurdas (1543-1630)—*Varan* and *Kabit Sawayyas* (1629)—which reflect his deep philosophical and theological interest and learning. He was a scribe to Guru Arjan Dev who compiled the Guru Granth. His works are interpretative and expository in nature<sup>13</sup> and also described as "the key to the scripture"<sup>14</sup> In his expositions he has attempted to analyze the Sikh teachings on the basis of Granth Sahib.<sup>15</sup> According to Trilochan Singh, "Bhai Gurdas' approach to Sikh theology was rational and philosophical in his *Vars* and mystical in his *Kabit Swayyas*".<sup>16</sup> As a matter of fact, in him we find a first theologian of Sikh Religion. Professor Sher Singh remarks "Bhai Gurdas' work is, in fact, an orthodox analysis of Sikh beliefs."<sup>17</sup> Thus signifying his place in Sikh religion, Macauliffe calls him the St. Paul of Sikhism.<sup>18</sup>

His main theological contribution stems out of his views on Guru and nature of Reality. He was so attracted by the personality of Guru that the primary purpose of his work seems to exalt and praise the Guru to the highest level of idealization.<sup>19</sup> He compared the Guru to the sun.<sup>20</sup> In his theology of Guruship he transcends Guru even to a level of God also. He can be regarded as the pioneer exponent of the theology of Guruship.

About the nature of Reality, he emphasized non-dualism: that Reality is one. He identified the Reality with *Braham* or God, and thus advocated a strong monotheism through his studies.

It is in Guru Gobind Singh (1666-1708) that we find the next important figure of early Sikhism. He comes tenth and the last in the series of Sikh Gurus. *Dasam Granth*, though its authorship as one-man's work is still a controversial issue,<sup>21</sup> is commonly known as a whole work of Guru Gobind Singh. *Dasam Granth* is occupied with two main themes: 'God and Sword'. In Guru Gobind Singh's theology "God and Sword became interchangeable terms".<sup>22</sup> His theology of Sword purports a theology of power or *shakti*, the use of which he justifies against injustice and crime. He also defines God through the use of negative terms and thereby propounds transcendentalism in Sikh theology.

#### (b) Middle Stage (1708-end of 19th Century)

With the passing away of Guru Gobind Singh an era of Gurus ended and we enter into another phase of Sikh religious writing which continued till the end of nineteenth century. It is in this period that the two Schools of Sikh theological studies, viz., *Nirmala* and *Giani* originated and remained influential till the end of the century. But because of its Hinduistic inclination as well as unwillingness to publish and sell its literature, the *Nirmala* School began to decline.

The *Nirmalas* were good scholars orientated in the Indian philosophical systems and learnings, particularly in the *Vedantic* philosophy. So, they used to interpret the Sikh religious concepts in the light of their philosophical learning and orientation. The scholars of this school were also known as the Sikh *Vedantins*. The *Giani* school of Sikh theology concentrated its study mainly on the works of expository nature. The *Gianis* were rather preachers than philosophers in matters of interpreting and explaining the theological concepts envisaged in the *Guru Granth*. Their works are found mostly in the form of commentaries and exegeses of

the scriptural text.

Pioneer in this period is the name of Bhai Mani Singh who having been trained by Guru Gobind Singh himself, started the school of Giani tradition. His work *Gian Ratanavali* appeared in the middle of eighteenth century. Later on this work is regarded as *Janam Sakhi*. It is full of biographical accounts and historical descriptions, and is very less purportive to the theological ideas. Following it there appeared other religious works by Bhallas. The "*Mahima Prakas Vartak* (prose) was written by Kirpal Singh Bhalla in 1741 and *Mahima Prakash Kavita* (verse) by Sarup Dass Bhalla in 1776. Each contains accounts of the lives of all the Gurus."<sup>23</sup>

Next comes Gulab Singh whose writings *Bhavarasmrit* (1777), *Mokh Panth* (1778), *Adhayatam Ramayan* (1782), and *Parbodhehandra Natak* (1792) reflect his Vedantic outlook.<sup>24</sup> He belongs to the Nirmala school of Sikh theology.<sup>25</sup> Coming in the same Nirmala tradition is the name of Bhai Santokh Singh.<sup>26</sup> His works *Guru Nanak Parkash* (1823) and *Gurpartap Surya* (1843) are biographical in content and subject-matter. However, his *Garb Ganjani Tika* (1829) is a work written in a commentary form and presents an exposition of sikh religious ideas.

It is towards the end of nineteenth century an interest began to take place in the studies of religious ideas of the *Guru Granth*. The literature dealing with the philosophy and other concepts of Sikh religion began to develop through prominent Sikh writers. Pioneer among them, were Pandit Sadhu Singh (1840-1907) and Pandit Tara Singh Narotam, both of them belonged to the Nirmala school of Sikh Learning. Their works occupy a significant place in Sikh theology.<sup>27</sup> *Gursikhia Parbhakar* and *Shri Mukhwak Sidhant* by Sadhu Singh describe general teachings, principles and ideas of Sikhism with philosophical meaning. Pandit Tara Singh Narotam wrote many books. Most of them are commentaries.<sup>28</sup> It is his *Gurmat Nirnai Sagar* (1877) which attempts to reveal his theological interest in the Studies of Sikhism.

Next comes Gyani Gian Singh whose important works such as *Pothi Sri Guru Panth Prakash* (1880) and *Twarikh Guru Khalsa* (1892) deal mainly with biographical and historical accounts of the Sikh Gurus and the Sikh church. However, his *Amrit Parkash* (1898) is a specific work on the theology of the Sacrament of Sikh Baptism. Similarly Pandit Bhanu Datt's writings<sup>29</sup> reveal biographical and historical accounts of the Gurus and the Sikh history. All these writings make a descriptive study of Sikhism.

In the same period we meet another important Sikh writer in the person of Avtar Singh. He is rather theological in his approach of study. His works *Sikkhi Dharam* (1894), *Khalsa Dharam Shastar* (1894), *Sikh Dharm Tatdarshan* (1899), *Khalsa Dharam Darpan* (1910) and *Gurdarshan Shastar* (1916) explain at length the general principles and teachings of Sikh faith. The religious rites and customs of Sikhism are also discussed in these works. The general nature of these writings is philosophical.

The philosophical trend in the study of Sikh religion is further maintained in the works such as *Khalsa Dharm* (1889) and *Khalsa Dharm Darpan* (1898) by Bhai Maiya Singh and Bhai Attar Singh respectively. These are interpretative and expository books on Sikh religious principles and ideas. It is in the *Sri Gurmat Mandan* (1898) by Bhai Hira Singh that "a survey of Sikh history and theology"<sup>30</sup> is made.

The general nature of the works during this whole period of middle age has remained biographical as well as exegetical and expository. However, the treatment made to the religious subjects is rather overtone with philosophical meanings. The works generally contain a discussion on the general principles, teachings, rituals and common beliefs of Sikhism. The theological ideas and concepts such as God, salvation, creation, Karma, Hukam, Guru and so on, are discussed very implicitly in the exegeses, expositions and commentaries of the Scriptures as well as in the writings of philosophical nature. Among the Theological concepts, discussed in these works, the concept of God occupied the



central theme. It seems that during this period the study of Sikh theological concepts and doctrines has not fully emerged and developed as an independent subject of writings. The conceptual themes are studied in the general study of Sikhism in these writings.

### (c) Modern Age : Twentieth Century

In Bhai Kahan Singh of Nabha we find a connecting link between the nineteenth and twentieth century study of Sikhism at a scholarly and an academic level. He was an eminent Sikh scholar of his time who made undeniably an important contribution to Sikh theological studies.<sup>31</sup> His works *Gurmat Parbhakar* (1893), *Gurmat Sudhakar* (1898), *Gurchand Divakar* (1914), *Sikhi Marg* and *Gurshabad Ratanakar* (1930) reflect a great devotion, industry, labour and literary endeavour. Though "These books are more of the nature of indexes than a synthetic study of Sikh theology,"<sup>32</sup> they laid down a significant basis and ground for further research work of a scholarly nature. Besides giving a scholarly information on various themes and subjects of Sikh religion, Kahan Singh has, in his studies, tried to indicate that the Sikh theological concepts are distinct in their own right. He was primarily an apologetic. *Ham Hindu Nahin* is a notable example of his apologetic work.

Contemporary to Bhai Kahan Singh, we meet another noted Sikh scholar in the person of Bhai Vir Singh. He has made a significant contribution to the field of Sikh religion and Punjabi literature. In the field of religious studies he has mostly done the work of editing and systematizing the materials and the works which was already existing.<sup>33</sup> He produced splendid exegetical literature including commentaries with annotated explanations on the Guru Granth text. He seems to have revived the Giani tradition of the Sikh theological studies through his works. Sahib Singh<sup>34</sup> who has done the similar work of the nature of commentary and exegesis comes in the same tradition of Giani school of learning.

It is with Bhai Jodh Singh that we enter upon the

twentieth century theological study of Sikhism. He is described as "the veteran scholar and Sikh theologian."<sup>35</sup> In fact he is the pioneer theologian of modern times who attempted to explain Sikh theological concepts and doctrines in a rather systematic and scholarly manner. Besides biographical works to his credit, he wrote a good deal on Sikh theology. The works such as *Vyakhyan Sikh Dharm Par* (1911), *Sikhi Ki Hai* (1911), *Religion and Religious Life as Conceived by Guru Nanak* (1925), *Gurmat Nirnai* (1932), *Some Studies in Sikhism* (1953), *Teachings of Guru Nanak* (1959) and *Gospel of Guru Nanak* (1969) reflect his scholarship and learning on the Sikh theological studies. At various places he has specifically discussed the theological doctrines such as God, creation, man and Guru etc., in his writings. His treatment of the Sikh theology of Yoga is a remarkable contribution to the Sikh theological thoughts. His other writings<sup>36</sup> make an important addition to the scholarly studies of the Sikh Scriptures.

There is one basic thing to be noted in Bhai Jodh Singh's writings. It is his apologetic approach to the subject of Sikh studies. He seems to be more emphatic on pointing out the distinct individuality of the Sikh religion and its theology against the background of attacking views that Sikhism was a part of Hinduism. *Guru Sahib Ate Ved* (1911) is a significant work in this direction.

The beginning two decades of the twentieth century produced an enormous literature on Sikh Religion. Some of the works reflected evangelistic and exegetical nature, and some dealt with biographies and histories of Gurus, Saints and other important lives in the Sikh tradition. The writings which dealt with religious themes and ideas were mostly dominated with apologetic and even polemical outlook.<sup>37</sup> The natural reason for such an outlook lies in the circumstances and conditions with which Sikhism was confronted in the beginning period of the twentieth century. Sikhism was under severe attacks and criticisms brought over it mostly by Hindus who were trying to establish that

the Sikhs were either Hindus or a part of Hindu tradition. In order to defend their faith as well as to establish their distinct entity and religion, the Sikhs were writing such apologetical literature. And some of the writers even went to an extent of being polemic in their attitude.

A very few writings could devote an attention on the theological side of the Sikh faith. But by and large the basic nature of these writings still remained apologetic. In this direction the works such as *Gurmat Sambandhi Vayakhan* (1904) and *Gurmat Itihas Guru Khalsa* (1911) of Gyani Sardul Singh and Bhai Labh Singh respectively, make big essays on Sikh theology and on the development of Sikh faith. Bawa Chhajju Singh in his *The Ten Gurus and Their Teachings* (1903) studies the basic theological ideas of Sikh religion. Sewa Ram Singh's *A Critical Study of the Life and Teachings of Sri Guru Nanak Dev* (1904) and *Amrit* (1913) are the works of the similar nature. In the same manner Sampuran Singh in his work *Gurmat Sidhant Biyora* (1913) elucidates the Sikh principles and teachings. But all these works could not make out specific and systematic study of Sikh theological ideas, and also could not detach themselves from apologetic outlook.

It is Principal Teja Singh who initiated an academic and scholarly interest in Sikh religious studies. His works<sup>38</sup> are the significant pieces of writings covering a wide range of subjects on Sikh Religion and theology. Theology of Nam, God and revelation are his important contribution to Sikh theological studies.

Another important attempt of the scholarly nature was made by Khazan Singh in his *History and Philosophy of the Sikhs* (1914). In the second part of this book he discusses the Sikh theological concepts such as God, worship, transmigration, soul, Guru Khalsa and so forth in a rather lucid manner. He explains these concepts with philosophical connotations and meanings.

This aroused a scholarly and philosophical interest in the study of Sikh religion. And as such the philosophy of Sikh religion began to secure a central concern in the Sikh

religious writings. Attracted with this trend Sardul Singh Kaveeshar wrote *The Sikh Studies* (1937) and *Sikh Dharam Darshan*; and Sher Singh Kashmir wrote *Atam Darshan* and *Vahe Guru Darshan* (1946) through which he made a significant contribution to the doctrines of Homai and Hukham. Among the writings of this nature the work of Sher Singh, entitled *Philosophy of Sikhism* (1944) occupies an outstanding place in the Sikh religious readings. It is a scholarly and standard work on the philosophy of Sikh religion. The theology of Vismad which forms the central theme of his writing is a unique contribution to the Sikh theological studies.

Expressing the theological nature the writings of Bhai Randhir Singh are very significant. In his works<sup>39</sup> he has attempted a very serious study of Sikh theological ideas and practices. His special contribution comes from his studies on the theology of meditation. Kapur Singh's *Parasharprasana or the Baisakhi of Guru Gobind Singh* (1959) is another significant work of a biographical and a theological nature.

Now we have noticed that towards the middle of twentieth century a change in the nature of writings became more apparent. From exegetical and evangelical nature it grew more scholarly and academic. From apologetical and polemical stress it turned to be more philosophical and theological, more critical and objective. Doctrinal and conceptual themes also became the central interest of the Sikh theological studies.

It is in the last decade that we witness a great revolution in Sikh writings. During this period Sikhism attracted a wide interest in its studies. A great amount of scholarly literature came out from the pen of noted Sikh scholars. This may be on account of two major events of Guru Gobind Singh's Tercentenary celebration in 1966 and Guru Nanak's 500th birth anniversary in 1969 that Sikhism excited a wide interest in its studies. It also attracted an attention of the people of scholarly and academic career. As a result a learned study of Sikhism emerged in these last few years. The literature

produced during this period touched various aspects of Sikhism such as biography, history, philosophy, sociology, polity, art, culture, poetry, literature, religion, theology, and so on and so forth.

The modern or current theological study of the Sikh faith assumed a more systematic shape and grew more advanced, detached, and impartial than that of its previous nature. Some of the writers even attempted a critical study of the Sikh scriptures and its tenets. Theological doctrines and ideas were given re-thinking and re-examination in some of the works during this period.

In this direction Narain Singh made a remarkable contribution. *Our Heritage* (1967), *Guru Nanak-Re-interpreted* (1965), *Guru Nanak's View of Life* (1965) are his standard writings of theological nature. His theology of Guruship marks a peculiar place as the same seems to be a remarkable re-interpretation and renovation of the traditional theology of Guruship. He explains the identification between God and Guru on spiritual and on ontological levels, and does not define Guru on panegyric basis.

A critical attempt to define and outline the various important theological concepts of Sikh religion has been made by Surender Singh Kohli in his works, *A Critical Study of Adi Granth* (1961), *Outlines of The Sikh Thought* (1966) and *Philosophy of Guru Nanak* (1969).

An article "Theological Concepts of Sikhism" as well as a small book entitled *Guru Nanak's Religion : A Comparative Study of Religions* (1969) by Trilochan Singh make a specific essay on Sikh theology. Here he has tried to systematize in much clearly defined meanings some of the important doctrines and concepts of Sikh theology.

Keeping in line with the nature of these above mentioned writings of this period there appeared other important works such as *The Heritage of the Sikhs* (1964) and *Guru Nanak and Origins of the Sikh Faith* (1969) by Harbans Singh, *Guru Nanak Darshan* (1965) by Kala Singh Bedi, *Guru Nanak Chintan te Kala* (1967) and *Jap Darshan Deedar* (1969)

by Taran Singh, *Gurmat Vichardhara* (1969) by Bhagat Singh Hira, *Sidhant Guru Nanak* (1969) By Sant Atam Singh, *The Philosophy of Guru Nanak : A Comparative Study* (1969) by Ishar Singh, *Aspects of Guru Nanak's Philosophy* (1969) and *Guru Nanak Sidhant* (1969) by Wazir Singh, *The Sikh Way of Life* (1968) by Raghubir Singh, *The Religion of the Sikhs* (1971) by Gopal Singh, *Guru Nanak and the Logos of Divine Manifestation* (1969) by Sharad Chandra Verma, *Sri Guru Granth Darshan* (1960) and *Guru Nanak Dev : Jiwan Aur Darshan* (1972) by Jaya Ram Misra and *Guru Nanak Vichar Adhyan* (1969) and *Trinity of Sikhism* (1972) by Pritam Singh. These works make a learned study of Sikh philosophy, religion and theology, and bring Sikh theology to a systematic level. These writings are more academic and more detached from apologetic bias and prejudice, and make a real modern literary treasure on Sikh theology covering a vast studies of Sikh doctrines and concepts. A serious exploration in the foundation of Sikh faith seems to have been made during this last period.

A treatment to the mystic outlook of Guru Nanak has been attempted by Darshan Singh and Gurbachan Singh Talib in their works, *The Religion of Guru Nanak* (1970) and *Guru Nanak : His Personality and Vision* (1969) respectively. Mysticism of Guru Nanak has been an ignored aspect in the philosophical and theological studies of Sikhism. Their attempt in this direction marks a unique feature in Sikh studies.

On the study of Sikh ethics, Avtar Singh's *Ethics of the Sikhs* (1970) owes a credit of being called a very important work in this direction. There are other works on Sikh Ethics such as *Ethics of Sikhs* (1953) by Randhir Singh; *Guru Nanak : Religion and Ethics* (1968) by Balwant Singh Anand; *Sikh Ethics* (1973) by Surinder Singh Kohli.

A very careful and a systematic study of Sikh theology has been attempted by Rattan Singh Jaggi in his work *Guru Nanak Ki Vichardhara* (1969). This is a study which explores the very basis of Sikhism and examines its theological tenets with a critical and academic perspective.

The latest publication, *Perspectives on Guru Nanak* (1975) edited by a noted Sikh scholar, Professor Harbans Singh,<sup>40</sup> is an outstanding scholarly effort to study the basis and the nature of the Sikh faith from various levels of dimensions. It attempts to sketch out a complete view of the basic beliefs of the Sikhs as propounded by its founder, Guru Nanak. A parallel to this work is a publication *Sikh Falsafe di Rup Rekha* (1975) edited by Preetam Singh. It contains articles on several Sikh theological concepts and doctrines written by different Sikh scholars. This work can be attributed as an exclusive and very systematic attempt on Sikh theology.

### Part II : Western Study

Among the Western scholars, we find a very few who took interest in the theological studies of Sikhism. Most of the works are seized with an interest to trace the history of the Sikhs than to explore their religious system and the basis of their beliefs.

The Western study of the Sikhs is initiated by Major James Browne who translated a manuscript on Sikh history into English and pulished the same under the title *History of the Origin and Progress of the Sicks* (1788).<sup>41</sup> This is followed impetuously by other original writings of the Western writers. But these were only elementary books on the Sikhs. It is J. D. Cunningham who attempted "the first serious study of the Sikhs" in his *History of the Sikhs* (1849).<sup>42</sup> The main concentration of all these writings centered round the general History of the Sikhs.

A study of the religious history and the religious systems of the Sikhs was first introduced by John Malcolm in his *Sketch of the Sikhs* (1810).<sup>43</sup> Besides narrating biographical and historical accounts this work speaks on the general nature of the Sikh religion. It assesses the contents of the Guru Granth in these words, "These are all in praise of the deity, of religion, and of virtue; and against impiety, "and immorality."<sup>44</sup>

Based on Malcolm's "Sketch", H. H. Wilson attempted a religious study of the Sikhs in his article *Civil and Religious*

*Institutions of the Sikhs* (1848).<sup>45</sup> It is simply a narrative and descriptive account of the lives of the Gurus and of the elementary nature of the Sikh Religion. The work suffers from the weakness of the author's inadequate knowledge and understanding of the Sikh faith, and as such presents a rather crude study of the Sikh religion. At various places the writer makes also derogatory remarks on the Guru Granth as well as on the Sikh religion itself.<sup>46</sup>

It is Trumpp, a German missionary, who expressed a keen interest in the study of Sikh scriptures, religion and theology. He did a partial translation of the *The Adi Granth* (1877). His other findings and research studies, which are included in the preceeding pages of the translation, attempt to explain a few Sikh theological ideas. But like Wilson, Trumpp also showed offensive and derogatory attitude in his studies.

The next serious attempt was that of Macauliffe.<sup>47</sup> His monumental work *The Sikh religion* was published in 1909. Besides rendering an English version of the Guru Granth, he has also discussed a few theological concepts, particularly the concepts of God, Guru and Nirvan which form the central theme of his observations in Sikh studies. But "it is with regard to Sikh ethics that Macauliffe makes his greatest contribution."<sup>48</sup> Based on Macauliffe's work, Dorothy Field showed her theological interest in Sikhism in her writing *The Religion of the Sikhs* (1914).

Reflecting some religious interest in Sikh studies there appeared other works by scholars like Barth, Carpenter, Bloomfield, Macnicol and Widgery. But "none of these works satisfied the philosophic instinct of a critic."<sup>49</sup>

*Sikhism* an article by Frederick Pincott, published in 1901, deserves to be called the work of a real theological study of the Sikh faith. The article is a brief essay studying the basic religious ideas and concepts of Sikhism in the light of his investigation of the religious and philosophical background of the Sikh religion. The nature of this study can be best judged from the statement he made in his work, "such was



the philosophical basis of Sikhism; and we will now give our attention to the history of the creed, and to the changes which time wrought on this earliest form of faith."<sup>50</sup> Somewhat similar trend was shown by E. Guilford in his small work *Sikhism* (1915).

Towards the middle of the twentieth century the works of two important writers, John Clark Archer and Duncan Greenlees, showed an intimate study of Sikh Religion. *The Sikhs in Relation to Hindus, Moslems, Christians, and Ahmadiyyas : A Study on Comparative Religion*, (1946) by Archer provides a big survey of Sikh history, general nature of the Sikh religion and its comparative position. A brief study of Sikh theology which he makes out in the last portion of his work mainly concentrates on the ideas of God and Guru. Like Wilson and Trumpp, Archer too could not detach himself from his derogatory and unappreciative outlook towards Sikhism. It is *The Gospel of Guru Granth Sahib* (1952) by Greenlees, which makes a simple description of theological ideas of Sikhism.

Of the latest western scholars C. H. Loehlin occupies an important place in Sikh studies. His works, *The Sikhs and Their Scripture* (1958), *The Christian Approach to the Sikh* (1966) and *The Granth of Guru Gobind Singh and The Khalsa Brotherhood* (1971), reflect his deep study of the scripture and the religion of the Sikhs. He deals with the religious themes of Sikhism in a general manner.

A close perusal of the above described Western works will show that God and Guru have been the central themes of the Western theological studies of Sikhism. The theological aspect of Sikh studies still lacks determinate and concentrated attention of the Western scholars. The general nature of their study of the Sikh religion is rather peripheral than being deep and philosophical. Professor Harbans Singh remarks, "There has been some writings by foreigners, but this is by and large peripheral—inspired more by curiosity about the Sikhs as a people than by a desire to prove the spiritual and philosophical basis of their inspiration."<sup>51</sup>

"However, it is W.H. McLeod's recent *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion* (1968) which earns the right to be called the first thorough unbiased, critical, and original western study of the foundation of Sikhism."<sup>52</sup> McLeod surpassed the Western scholars in the theological studies of Sikh religion. It is in his work that we find a very clear and systematic study of the basic and major Sikh theological doctrines has been attempted.

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. See Harbans Singh, 'Scholarly Study of Sikhism', *The Journal of Religious Studies*, Vol. II, Punjabi University, Patiala, Autumn, 1970, p. 71.
2. See Fauja Singh, 'Development of Sikhism Under the Gurus', *Sikhism*, Punjabi University, Patiala, 1969, p.3.
3. See Sher Singh, *Philosophy of Sikhism*, Delhi, Sterling Publishers, 2nd ed., 1966, p.21.
4. "Ever since the Sikhs were busy in their struggle for existence, naturally they became negligent of the doctrinal side of their religion." Sher Singh, *Ibid.*, p. 21.
5. Ernest Trumpp, *The Adi Granth (Trans.)*, London, Wm. H. Allen & Co., Waterloo Place, 1877, p. VIII.
6. Major R. Leech as quoted by N. Gerald Barrier, *The Sikhs and Their Literature*, Delhi, Manohar Book Service, 1970, p. XVIII.
7. See Harbans Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 71 and Cf. N. Gerald Barrier, *Ibid.*, p. XVIII.
8. Darshan Singh Maini, 'Introduction', *Sikhism*, Punjabi University, Patiala, 1969, p.XII.
9. "There is no such thing as dogmatic theology in Sikhism" Trilochan Singh, "Theological Concepts of Sikhism", in *Sikhism*, Punjabi University, Patiala, 1969, p.42.
10. "This is not to aver that its stand is dogmatic for the Sikh Gurus have never countenanced dogma and Shibboleth. Darshan Singh Maini, *op. cit.*, p. XIII; Cf. Trumpp, *op. cit.*, p. XCVII.
11. "The Janamsakhis accounts tell their story in the language of myth and legend." Harbans Singh, *Guru Nanak and Origins of The Sikh Faith*, Delhi, Asia Publishing House, 1969, p. 15.
12. Harbans Singh, *Ibid.*, p. 15; Earnest Trumpp, *op. cit.*, p. 2.
13. See W. H. McLeod, *Guru Nanak and The Sikh Religion*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1968, pp. 14-15.

14. Harbans Singh, 'Guru Nanak and Origins of The Sikh Faith', *op. cit.*, p. 14; and See Khazan Singh, *History and Philosophy of the Sikhs*, Lahore, Nawal Kishor press, 1914, p.25.
15. "The attempt to analyse the Sikh teachings on the basis of the Granth was made by Gurdas in the days of Guru Arjan." Sher Singh, *op.cit.*, p. 9.
16. Trilochan Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 43.
17. Sher Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 9.
18. M. A. Macauliffe, 'The Sikh Religion', 'A Symposium, Calcutta, Susil Gupta (India) Private Ltd., 1958, p. 18.
19. "The primary purpose of this Var is to extol the greatness of the first six Gurus", W. H. McLeod, *op. cit.*, p.14.; "Besides the vars, Gurdas wrote Kabits, which contains the Sikh tenets and a panegyric of the Gurus," M. A. Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion*, Delhi, S. Chand & Co., Vol. 1-2, 1963, p. LXXXIII.
20. J.S. Grewal, *Guru Nanak in History*, Publication Bureau, Panjab University, Chandigarh, 1969, p. 296.
21. See Rattan Singh Jaggi, *Dasam Granth Ki Pauranik Prisht Bhumi*, Bharti Sahitya Mandir, 1965, p.1; and see Preetam Singh Gill, *Sri Guru Gobind Singh : Ik Darshnik Adhyan*, Jallundur, New Book Co., 1967, p. 17.
22. Harbans Singh and Lal Mani Joshi, *An Introduction to Indian Religions* by, Punjabi University, Patiala, 1973, p. 252.
23. Harbans Singh, *Guru Nanak and Origins of The Sikh Faith*, p. 31.
24. See Sher Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 12.
25. Bhai Kahan Singh, *Mahan Kosh*, (Encyclopaedia of Sikh Literature), Patiala, Bhasha Vibhag Punjab, 3rd, ed., 1974, p. 423.
26. Bhai Kahan Singh, *Ibid*, p. 244.
27. See Harbans Singh, 'Scholarly Study of Sikhism', *op. cit.*, p. 80.
28. Commentaries such as *Mokh Panth da Tika* (1865), *Jap Rahiras Sohila ate Hazare Sabadan da Tika* (1879), *Bhagatan di Bani da Tika* (1882) and *Sri Rag Da Tika* (1885).
29. Pandit Bhanu Datt's works, *Guru Singh Itihas* (1883) and *Guru Singh Sabha Itihas* (1892).
30. N. Gerald Barrier, *op. cit.*, p. 19.
31. Cf. Prof. Teja Singh, 'The Singh Sabha Movement', *The Panjab Past and Present*. Vol. VII, Part-1, S.No. 13, April 1973, ed. Ganda Singh, Punjabi University, Patiala, p. 36.
32. Sher Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 15.
33. Bhai Vir Singh's edited works, *Gurpartap Suriya*; *Panth Parkash*; *Puratan Janam Sakhi*; *Guru Nanak Chamatkar* (1928); *Kalgidhar Chamatar* (1925) and *Asht Gurchamatkar*.
34. "Sahib Singh made a pioneering study of the grammer of the Guru

- Granth and continued his studies to produce a prestigious ten-volume exegesis which has been recently published," Harbans Singh, 'Scholarly Study of Sikhism', *op. cit.*, p. 81.
35. Gurmukh Nihal Singh, ed. *Guru Nanak, His Life Time and Teachings*, Delhi, Guru Nanak Foundation, 1969; p.viii.
  36. *Sawayye* (1953), *Japji* (1956) and *Kartarpur Wali Bir De Darshan*, and *Lectures on Guru Granth Sahib* (1955).
  37. Apologetical writings, e.g., such as *Sikh Hindu Nahin*, 1905 by Naurang Singh; *Arian de Dhol da Pol*, *Panth K'alsa Pustak*, 1908, and *Gurmat Virodh Binash* 1908, all by Bhai Mohan Singh Vaid; *Sikh de Dayanandi Ved* 1911, and *Guru Granth te Sikh Panth* by Gyani Sher Singh; works of polemical nature e.g., *Mera ate Sadhu Dayanand da Sambandh*, 1900, and *Pamma*, 1906, by Gyani Ditt Singh; *Isai Prabodh*, 1903, by Ganga Singh; *Pakhand Khandan*, 1907, by Harnam Singh; *Rehat Parkash*, 1911, by Ajmer Singh; *Vedan da pol*, 1912 by Budh Singh; *Granth Trimar Nas*, 1912 by Budh Singh Gurdaspur; *Panth ate Prarthana* 1900, and *The Sikh and His New Critics*, 1918, by Bhagat Lakshman Singh.
  38. Principal Teja Singh's works : *Guru Nanak and His Mission*, 1918; *The Sword and Religion*, 1918; *Essays on Sikhism*. 1941; *Growth of Responsibility in Sikhism* 1948, and *Sikhism its Ideals and Institutions*, 1951.
  39. Bhai Randhir Singh's works : *Gurnati Lekhi*, 1962; *Gurnati Bibek*, 1946; *Anhad shabad Dasam Dwar*, 1963; and *Nam Abhiyas Kamai*, 1962.
  40. Prof. Harbans Singh is an author of many works, *The Heritage of The Sikhs*, 1964; *Guru Gobind Singh*, 1964; and *Guru Nanak and Origins of the Sikh Faith*, 1969, *Maharaja Ranjeet Singh*.
  41. Harbans Singh, 'Scholarly Study of Sikhism', *op. cit.*, p. 81.
  42. Harbans Singh, *Ibid.* p. 75, See Sher Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 23, and Stephen Dunning, 'The Sikh Religion : An Examination of Some of Western Studies' *The Journal of Religious Studies*, p. 3.
  43. The view expressed by Sher Singh (see his work *op. cit.*, p. 23.) that the Western attempt to study the religious side of the Sikhs was first made by H. H. Wilson, seems unacceptable on the simple ground that the contents of Wilson's article are much similar to that of Malcolm who precedes Wilson in his writings. This fact has also been testified by Macauliffe in these words, "Horace Hayman 'Wilson's account of the Sikhs was professedly based on Malcolm's "Sketch," ('The Sikh Religion', *A Symposium; op. cit.*, p.1.), who accepts Malcolm as the forerunner of the Western Study of Sikh Religion.
  44. John Malcolm, 'Sketch of the Sikhs', *The Sikh Religion : A Symposium*, p. 1.
  45. M. Macauliffe, 'The Sikh Religion', *The Sikh Religion : A Symposium*, p. 1.

46. Wilson remarks, "This exposition of the Sikh Faith, if anything so vague deserves the appellation of a faith, is known as the *Adi Granth*, the 'First Book' to distinguish it from another scriptural authority of the Sikhs of a later date. It is a large volume but contains no systematic exposition of doctrines—no condensed creed—no rules for ritual observances ....." "Civil and Religious Institutions of the Sikhs", *The Sikh Religion : A Symposium*, p. 55. And see also his remarks on page 68, 'From this Sketch, imperfect as it must necessarily be, it will be seen that the Sikh religion scarcely deserve the name of a religious faith.'
47. Sher Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 24.
48. Stephen Dunning, *op. cit.*, p. 10.
49. Sher Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 24.
50. Frederic Pincott, 'Sikhism,' *The Sikh Religion : A Symposium*, p. 76.
51. Harbans Singh, 'Scholarly Study of Sikhism', *op. cit.*, p. 81.
52. Stephen Dunning, *op. cit.*, p. 4.  
\*It is recently that McLeod has become controversial because of his later writings.